Mercy Otis Warren

SELECTED LETTERS

Edited by Jeffrey H. Richards & Sharon M. Harris

VISIT…

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EDITED BY Jeffrey H. Richards
AND Sharon M. Harris

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INTRODUCTION

Mercy Otis Warren, Revolutionary Correspondent

When the committed American Revolutionary, pathbreaking author, and resolute Republican Mercy Otis Warren penned a letter, she rarely wrote just a note. Instead, she seemed to imagine history looking over her shoulder, urging her to speak both to her correspondent and to posterity. Over a period of forty-five years, until her death in 1814, the Massachusetts native extolled, educated, preached, prayed, raged, and wept in her letters. She also kept copies of many of them for herself, manuscripts that she later had transcribed in finer penmanship, with points and spelling corrected, to leave for future generations. The rising youth of the nation, she imagined, would know precisely why she preached and why she taught, even if her contemporaries did not always grasp the opportunities before them. But to both younger and older recipients, Warren rarely failed to offer some lesson that life had laid before her. Indeed, as a correspondent, Warren was never content to comment idly on her own activities. Smart, politically committed, and driven, she discovered she had things to say and, while usually decorous in doing so, did not fear to say them. For Warren, a letter was a document—private to be sure, but also meant for a public—a record of evolving citizenship in the suddenly emergent United States. One might say that, through her course of letters, she deliberately and self-consciously engaged in defining what an American should and could be.

Identifying Mercy Warren, however, may not be as easy as identifying the new America she sought to shape and correct.[1] Recognized now

as the author of three political satiric dramas (*The Adulateur*, *The Defeat*, and *The Group*), a book of poems and two verse dramas (in her *Poems, Dramatic and Miscellaneous*), and a three-volume history of the American Revolution (*History of the Rise, Progress, and Termination of the American Revolution*), Warren has sometimes been overshadowed in literary and social history by other contemporaries, notably Abigail Adams. Nevertheless, the full body of her work, including her correspondence, deserves more attention than it has received. With this volume, for the first time, a book-length collection of her letters is being published. Warren deserves center stage for the quality and variety of those letters, which offer a fresh look at the American Revolution and the new republic through the eyes of an intense, interested, and often stylistically elegant observer.

Born in 1728 in the old but provincial Cape Cod town of Barnstable, Mercy Otis faced the usual education in the domestic arts for a girl of those times. But because her father, James Otis, had ambitions for his family, notably his sons James Jr. and Joseph, Mercy at first watched and then participated in the precollegiate education her brothers received. As she sat in on their lessons in history, geography, and other disciplines of the day, she discovered a facility for them; but denied the true marks of an eighteenth-century education—knowledge of Latin and Greek (limited to boys only)—she also confronted the very real barriers to entrance into the public world that all young women met. For the rest of her life, she probed and poked at the wall between the sexes, occasionally chipping a brick here or opening a hole there. Never a confrontational feminist, Mercy Otis Warren nevertheless felt uneasy resting content with the gender status quo. A woman could know things and write them down, and at some point in her adult life, Warren was determined to show the one by doing the other. By the 1760s, first through her writing of poems, and then more pointedly in her writing of letters, she found that her words had the power to bring change—even to bring revolution.

The problem was that there were few models of New England women who spoke out, even in epistolary terms, on the issues of the day. Certainly, within the provincial circles young Mercy Otis inhabited, there were almost no opportunities to interact with literary or political women. Yet somehow, through her own reading, and perhaps through discussions with her much-loved older brother, the Harvard-educated lawyer James, or in the widening social network she fostered following her marriage to James Warren of

Plymouth, another Harvard graduate (two years behind her brother), she must have become aware that in Boston, or certainly in England, women did display learning as something other than a drawing-room entertainment. Naturally, in a patriarchal society, women like the bluestockings of Great Britain became easy targets for humor that had the purpose of belittling female intelligence and abilities. But Mercy Warren must have recognized in the lives of Elizabeth Montagu and Elizabeth Carter, to name two bluestockings of whom she had certainly heard, a future that also lay before *her*. The trick was to find a social space in which exercise of one's intellectual and artistic gifts would at the least not be prohibited—and perhaps even be encouraged.[2]

In the years following her 1754 marriage to James Warren, an agriculturalist and local politician, Mercy had little time in which to indulge a wandering muse. In 1757 they became the owners of two homes, one a farm formerly owned by James's father, who willed it to his son, and the other a house on North Street in the heart of Plymouth. That year, Mercy gave birth to the first of five sons, James; her childbearing ended in 1766 with the birth of George. Even so, with two homes to manage and five children to rear and educate, she began her experiments in verse. In 1766 two young sisters died, whom she memorialized in poems. Other occasional poems followed. Presumably, she wrote letters during those years as well; it took the better part of a day just to travel to Barnstable, a trip one only entertained when planning to stay for several days, and thus one might conceivably write home even from that comparatively short distance. Letters by her from this period, however, have not emerged from the archives.

But we do know from comments in later letters to her and by her that her husband was quite struck with his wife's literary competence. He encouraged her, told her when he liked something, seemed even to be proud that his wife wrote with such skill and conviction. Given the general lack of encouragement for female literacy outside domestic amusements, James's continuing affirmation of her abilities must have been a major factor in the expansion of her literary repertoire. Her brother, too, seems to have considered her a fellow intellectual and writer. So while Mercy Warren's material world encompassed not much more than Plymouth County in colonial Massachusetts, she did not give up the idea that along with her titles of wife, mother, sister, and daughter, the usual forms for identifying women in the eighteenth century, she might also add one more: author.

Biographers often point to one episode, the beating of her brother James by a political enemy and his subsequent debility (most likely the result of a previously manifesting mental illness), as a cause for Mercy Warren's sudden efflorescence as a writer. That argument carries considerable weight, given the frequency with which Warren mentions James Otis Jr. in letters, often in heroic terms, for his early voice in argument for the rights of colonial Americans. Even so, the episode does not fully explain her urgency to write and to expand her social network so widely. Looking at Warren as a kind of puppet for Otis in the end does not really acknowledge her own gifts, or her personal limitations. She may have imagined herself carrying the torch for Otis, but the voice she used was her own, a distinctive, monitory voice that one can hear clearly in her correspondence. The beating of her brother, which accentuated his tendency toward mental illness, was the excuse used at the time, but given the strength of her convictions, it seems now that something else might have come along to prod her into speech.

Whatever the cause, Warren started writing with determination. The earliest known letter, a copy of one she sent to her brother after his beating, was most probably written in autumn of 1769 (number 1 in this collection).[3] Thereafter, for the next twenty years, Warren wrote hundreds of letters, her satiric plays, most of her poems, and her two verse tragedies, *The Ladies of Castile* and *The Sack of Rome*. While her public voice displayed a fierce interest in politics, her private one showed a broader range of concerns. She could be extremely political in correspondence, to be sure, but she could also put aside partisanship to commiserate over someone's loss, to share moments from her sons' lives with her husband, or to write about something she had recently read. Although Warren's literary reputation was made with her published works, what she wrote most during that period were letters.

Another problem one faces in pondering who Warren was centers on her friendship with John and Abigail Adams. In the early 1770s the Adamses and Warrens found themselves sharing strong republican ideals and opposition to the royal colonial government in Massachusetts. Not only did Warren befriend Abigail Adams, who eagerly sought out advice and ideas from the older Mercy, but she also took the bold step of engaging John Adams as a separate friend, to whom she could write on political matters. The story of their friendship is well known. From close contact and frequent correspondence in the years running up to the Revolution, through

a slow distancing during the war, to a faster estrangement as James Warren effectively retired from public life while John Adams took on positions of increasing national importance and responsibility, the Warren-Adams relationship grew cooler in tone and more formal in expression as they found less to agree on. The Warrens were fervent states' rights Republicans, the Adamses fervent central-authority Federalists. Each family expressed doubts about the other's suitability to play roles of prominence in the emerging United States. Once John Adams became president in 1797, relations continued, but under extremely strained circumstances. Put simply, the Warrens favored one party, the Adamses another, and party spirit, in the term of the day, divided many Americans starkly from one another—even old friends.

The final straw, in the usual narrative of Warren-Adams relations, was the 1805 publication of Mercy Warren's *History of the Rise, Progress, and Termination of the American Revolution*, a three-volume opus that made her the first significant female historian in America and made John Adams an angry man. Her treatment of him, he raged in long letters, was false and unconscionable. His sense of his own importance, she replied in equally long letters, was overblown and mistaken. They traded salvos over several weeks and then retreated to separate corners in stormy silence. After several years of noncommunication, they resumed relations through the agency of a mutual friend, Elbridge Gerry, and had some small epistolary contact in the last year or so of Warren's life. Important as that relationship was, however, it is equally important to note that letters to John and Abigail (and occasionally to one or another of the Adams children) constitute only a portion of Mercy's extensive correspondence.[4]

During the Revolution, Warren saw herself as a participant in the action. She could be critical of patriot policy and individuals, but in the main she affirmed a Whig view of history, saw republicanism as the proper future of the nation, and shared in the celebration for the newly created nation at war's end. A move from Plymouth to Milton in 1781 put her closer to Boston, which to some extent obviated the need for her correspondence, but it also seems paradoxically to have left her feeling somewhat dislocated from the pulse of things. As her husband suffered various political reverses during the 1780s and her sons suffered also—James lost a leg as a lieutenant of Marines during naval action; Winslow tried and failed at a career as an international merchant; Charles contracted tuberculosis and died abroad;

Henry failed to get a government position with the ports; and George, having tried and apparently disliked law, removed to Maine—Warren began to express doubts about the nation's future that reflected doubts about her own.

Once the Warrens sold the Milton house and moved back to Plymouth, backwater though it was, Mercy seems to have become re-engaged with her writing. Her volume of poems appeared in 1790, and she kept up work on her history. Surviving letters from the 1790s are fewer, however, and comments in some of them suggest that she went long periods without being moved by the epistolary muse. Part of the problem was physical. She suffered from severe headaches and partial blindness, and over time she gave up writing her own letters for occasionally dictating them to her son James, who eventually moved back to the Plymouth house. But more of the problem had to do with family. Her husband retired from active politics to pursue the life of a gentleman farmer, leaving him out of the limelight. Her son Winslow, having been arrested for debt and then escaping from justice, joined the army in time to march with General Arthur St. Clair to Ohio Territory on an expedition to put down an intertribal Native force in 1791 and was killed in that military action. Grieving the loss of Winslow in ways similar to her grief over the loss of mind (and eventually of life) of her brother James Otis, Warren turned more to religion for consolation and less to writing.

In her last years, those spent in the nascent nineteenth century, Warren at last saw her magnum opus, the *History*, issue forth from the press. That event marked also the termination of Warren's public career as a writer. She still wrote letters—including ferocious ones as occasion sometimes demanded, as when John Adams complained of her ill treatment of him in her *History*. But surviving manuscripts for this period are relatively few. One small cache of letters to a family friend, Sarah Cary, illuminates the private woman more than the public political commentator. What she wanted in those last years was contact, and with the death of her husband in 1808, she seems to have spent more time in relative solitude. To be sure, the grandchildren produced by her son Henry, the only one to marry, provided some delight. But for her final six years of life, she had but two sons living and no spouse. There are not many letters to show for those years, at least in comparison to the voluble 1770s and 1780s. Yet when she died in 1814, she would be remembered even in Boston and through descendants

would find a modicum of fame as one of Plymouth's great contributors to the ideological war for American independence.[5] The question that remains is how she will be remembered beyond Plymouth in the twenty-first century and after.

The Warren Correspondence

This volume presents more than one hundred letters by Mercy Warren, most of them previously unpublished, to a variety of persons and over her full career as a mature correspondent. Many Warren letters already appear in published volumes: the *Warren-Adams Letters*, a compilation of letters to and from the Warrens, the Adamses, and their close associates, published in 1917 and 1925; the *Adams Family Correspondence*; the *Papers of John Adams*; and *A Study in Dissent*, a collection of letters by and to Elbridge Gerry.[6] In addition, the complete exchange of letters between John Adams and Mercy Warren over the treatment Adams received in Warren's *History* was published in the nineteenth century and reprinted in the twentieth.[7] Small numbers of letters to famous persons, including George Washington, Thomas Jefferson, and Alexander Hamilton, appear in published collections of those figures' works. With a few exceptions, the editors have chosen not to reprint the letters found in those collections.

Instead of reprinting large numbers of letters to famous men (especially those already in print), we have decided to focus on two groups of correspondents, women and family members, who normally do not get the full attention of Warren historians, while still including a few letters to the prominent men with whom she exchanged correspondence. We have included a large number of letters by Mercy Warren to female correspondents; nearly half the selections in this volume are addressed to women, including letters to nineteen different recipients. Family members also constitute a significant portion of the selections, spread over ten recipients. There are a few letters to John and Abigail Adams to indicate their presence among Warren's correspondents, but because so many of her letters appear in relatively recent publications of Adams family papers, we have preferred to cast a wider net as a way of showing the broadest possible range of Warren's style and methods. Warren's correspondence with Catharine Macaulay, the British Whig historian and luminary, was of crucial importance to Warren's intellectual development and is represented

here by several letters over many years. In addition, letters to lesser-known women—not only Hannah Winthrop and Janet Montgomery, who have some small fame, but others who have left little trace, like Sarah Hesilrige, Ellen Lothrop, and Hannah Lincoln—appear here as well. Warren may not have left feminist signpost sentences like Abigail Adams's "Remember the Ladies," but she most certainly did not forget her sex either. Her letters to female correspondents show she conceived of herself as a woman among women—and not as a mother or domestic only. To the end of her days, Warren wrote to women on a number of topics that often do not get full play in extant Warren scholarship.

Perhaps one of the most interesting aspects of Warren's family correspondence is her writing to her second son, Winslow. Handsome (as we know from a surviving portrait by John Singleton Copley), literary, even raffish, Winslow struck some chord with the insistent, religious, and political mother that her other sons never did. Even as Winslow grew into unproductive adulthood, giving evidence of being more a ladies' man than a rising youth in a rising republic, Mercy preached to him with greater urgency to direct his energies toward more elevated tasks. The nineteen letters included here provide a fascinating glimpse into the world of early republican mother-son relations and indicate, perhaps, how a gendered world forced ambitious women like Mercy Warren to pour their own abilities into sons who barely deserved their attentions.

In other letters, Warren drops a sympathizing tear, as she might express it, for women in grief. To Janet Montgomery, Hannah Winthrop, and Dorothy Hancock, she shares in the loss each feels for a husband or child. As political as Warren was—and no American woman of her era was more political than she—party divisions or deep philosophical differences were temporarily erased in the reach across the gulf of grief. And of course Warren herself faced grief over her brother James, her father, and the deaths of three sons; letters here reflect her attempt to come to grips with the terrible losses of her children, all adults, in whom she had imagined the fate of the new country would rest. Their deaths, coupled with troubling political tendencies, bring to view a later, more disillusioned writer, who seeks semistoic consolation in a providential God rather than in her once-vibrant faith in American republicanism.

Nevertheless, Mercy Otis Warren left a substantial body of letters that reflect not only her considerable intellect, her faith in providence, her

compassion, her literary intelligence, and her righteous anger but also her knowledge and understanding of the art of letter writing. It is to Warren's participation in the wider practice of correspondence in the eighteenth century that we now turn.

Warren and the Art of Letter Writing

Letter-writing manuals proliferated in the eighteenth century. Aimed at audiences from the servant to the elite classes, the manuals created a culture in which the quality of letter writing signified both a writer's education and social mobility.[8] By the early 1770s, the manuals were advocating the art of "polite correspondence"; in spite of the reference to art, these guides continued to present formulaic models for epistolary exchanges.[9] But for a literary artist such as Warren, the letter was indeed an art form as important to her literary output as plays or poetry. When she trained her children in the art of writing, the letter was included along with poetry and narrative descriptions (L 48), and she used the genre to articulate her own assessment of the artistic qualities of letter writing.

As scholars of epistolarity have discerned, the formal characteristics of letters create meaning as much as the content itself.[10] Thus aspects of a given letter that shape meaning include an understanding of its audience and a style of address that may change according to recipient, but also more complex aspects such as issues of temporality, the immediacy of writing versus the necessary reliance on memory, whether or not the letter serves as a bridge or barrier to intimacy between writer and recipient, and the means by which letter writing becomes an autobiographical site for constructions of the self. Warren was well acquainted with the formal characteristics of letter writing that were prevalent in the manuals of her era. In her well-known letter critiquing Lord Chesterfield's published letters to his son, she articulated those characteristics: "the correct style, the elegant diction, the harmony of language, the thousand beauties of expression . . . with a code of politeness" (L 47).[11] But the extraordinary quality of Warren's own letters lies in her ability to move beyond the formulaic traits of polite correspondence to letter writing as an art form.

Letters serve as important historical documents that reveal cultural aspects of any given society, and Warren's letters offer a wealth of insights into eighteenth-century American culture, including social customs (L 36),

medical issues (L 31), attitudes on child rearing (L 31, 38, 39), wartime raping of women (L 34),[12] and a recognition that she was recording "the fate of empires" (L 35). So, too, did she recognize that letters were central to this unfolding national struggle: letters were used to direct military maneuvers (L 32, 34), and because of this function, their distribution between warring countries was banned by British proclamation (L 33).[13] But as this collection of Warren's letters reveals, in addition to the letter's function as a historical document it also was a genre in which Warren crafted her artistic talents. Despite her struggle to think in artistic terms under the duress of war (L 42), the letters served as a literary outlet for her. The use of theatrical analogies and metaphors in her letters is well recognized, but even more prevalent is her attention to nature as a source for analogies of human experiences and emotions. "My mind is made of Materials too succeptable of Every tender passion," she writes in 1780, "& my Gloomy North East Corner where days & Nights though Boreas Whistles in my Ears & the white Billows Roll before my Eyes Leads me to anticipate all the Evils of Life, & as no [??] Voice Breaks in upon the silent Contemplation, I sometimes Recover myself by a shower of tears" (L 50). And when she discusses the difficulty of drawing forth the muses in the midst of war, she proclaims, "If anything could awake the sleeping muses, or call back the wandring Deity, the Imagery of this delightful Morn, when the hand of nature has decorated everything with spangles of peculiar brilliancy, while the rising sun displays a calm, majestic brightness which gladdens the whole, and gives additional lustre to the whiteness of the new fallen snow, . . . might break their nap" (L 42).

The political nature of Warren's writing is evident on nearly every page, but the merging of the political and the artistic is integral to her letter-writing style. For example, when discussing the abuses of authority with Catharine Macaulay, Warren writes, "When this is the case the feelings of the man and the patriot are awakened and both the peasant and the statesman are urged to struggle even in *blood* to secure themselves and to posterity the claims they derive from heaven. When the scymitar is drawn from such principles as these, life and fortune are a feather in the balance against the chains of servitude, which have long clanked in the disgusted ear of America" (L 33). But it is the artistic phrasing ("the thousand beauties of expression") flowing from Warren's pen that solidifies the quality of her epistolary writing. "The *tale* of life" (L 37)—the artistic as well

as the mundane life—is captured over the decades of her letter-writing career.

Forms of address and tone are central tenets of letter writing. Because Warren was a keen political analyst, her letters often seem more distanced in tone than is typical of polite correspondence in the eighteenth century. Yet her tone is consonant with her political philosophy. Reason, Warren prays, will prevail in the volatile war years, and thus it is reason and philosophy that dominate her epistolary voices. But letters to close friends and family members reveal another side of Warren, an ability to capture the significance of the moment. With a revered figure such as Martha Custis Washington, she employs a tone of respect and formality (L 77). A tutorial tone is taken with the anonymous "Very Young Lady" (L 104) and her own children in a manner that resonates with the advice so prevalent in early American novels.[14] But it is with her son Winslow that Warren's letters reveal most clearly her desire to scrupulously blend a tone of affection and moral guidance:

> When a young gentleman first enters the more conspicuous stages of life and begins to tread the circle which circumscribes all the world can give, there are few things which are attended with more advantage than a just knowledge of the characters of those who court his acquaintance. Thus guarded, he may transact business with reputation, and toast the amusements adapted to his own age, untangled by the silken snares that have proved fatal to the virtue of thousands who started at the image of vice till grown familiar by imperceptible deviations:—deviations which he never would have slidden into but from a too intimate connexion with those, in whom genius may occasionally sparkle, though the attic[?] flame was never lighted in their bosoms; this must be kindled by an higher principle than that which animates the deistical caviller. (L 46)

Warren uses the technique of removing "I" and "you" in preference for the third-person voice of advice with Winslow to soften the moral lecture of her letter, in contrast to the more direct advice she gives to her peers.

If her formal and tutorial voices create a barrier to intimacy, her more personal expressions reflect the ways in which letters serve to bridge geographic distance. The letters to her husband are often sites for such expressions: "Don't you think I am discouraged or depressd when I write my

thoughts so truly[?] & fully. No[?] I seem to feel this day & Evening amidst a thousand gloomy Annecdots as if our God was about to Bring a deliverance by means which we cannot foresee" (L 32), or "as no [??] Voice Breaks in upon the silent Contemplation, I sometimes Recover myself by a shower of tears which flow from a sense of Gratitude that [the evils of life] are not yet Reallized" (L 50). But her ability to bridge differences is not simply geographic; as her letters to Catharine Macaulay reveal, she could use the epistolary form to bridge national differences.[15] Further, for Warren the emotional was an avenue into the philosophical, as revealed in letters to correspondents such as Hannah Winthrop:

> I am so far from cultivating that system of Stoicism in which some glory. There is a tribute of tears due to the worthy, if we have the example of a compassionate Saviour weeping over the *Manes* of a Friend; and as through this Saviour we have assurance of the resurrection of the dead, Oh! That we could learn with him to say (however embittered) "the cup which my Father hath given me, shall I not drink!" . . .
>
> You have a little more to do perhaps a little more to suffer e'er your kindred mind will be wafted to those airy regions which your philosophic and pious partner so often explored before he took possession. It is no wonder that a soul should calmly quit its clay tenement, that had so frequently been in heaven, and surveyed the starry firmament, as but one of the astonishing works of its Creator. (L 44)

Yet Warren was also gifted at controlling epistolary exchanges so as to strike the balance between formality and intimacy she sought in her correspondents. The most creative aspect of this control is in the creation of dialogues in which she predicts a correspondent's position on an issue and then responds to that asserted position. In other letters to the widowed Montgomery, for example, Warren writes:

> Thus Madam[?] before I was aware have I precluded the necessity of any future apology for the plaintiveness of your pen, by laying open the wounds in my own bosom, nor shall I ask an excuse for dwelling on the domestic tale, but still continue it long enough to thank heaven I have yet a friend, the partner of my felicities, and the support of my pensive hours. Methinks on the comparison I hear a gently reproving voice, complain not ungrateful woman, so long as

> such a companion is lent to smooth the thorns in the part of private life and to bear you above the billows that break on the public stage.
>
> I stand admonished—and bid a Truce to my tears;—but will readily accompany the widowed hand to spread over the Cypress and pour a plentiful shower into the Urn of a Montgomery. (L 43)

And a few months later:

> Pard[?] I tell my excellent friend I will gladly accompany her (whenever she calls upon me) either to the sequestered apartments of silence and contemplation, or to the more brilliant roofs of splendour and festivity. In the one we may weep the short date of human felicity, and in the other we may smile while we pity the mistaken group who grasp the airy phantom, nor will be persuaded it is illusion till even the shadow of happiness, disappears.
>
> But methinks I hear a conscious whisper "Is it kind thus frequently to look through the darkened glass at the vicissitudes of time, instead of holding the other end of the perspective to the eye of your friends?" I stand corrected and wish rather to lead her to survey a brighter landscape, interspersed with innumerable blessings and variegated with a thousand beauties, which when she has trodden o'er a little longer (though there may sometimes be a thorn in the way) she will reach the goal of ceaseless, perfect, permanent delight. (L 49)

By creating these letter-dialogues, Warren curtails what apparently seemed like excessive lamentations from Montgomery, while at the same time reminding herself that she is fortunate that her own spouse has survived the battles of war. And as Warren understood, writing letters to friends was important to a person who, as she sometimes described herself, was "too much secluded from society" (L 42).

Within the broad scope of Warren's correspondents, she signified some as acquaintances and others as true friends—and it was letter writing that helped define the difference. By articulating her expectations of what traits were necessary to produce a good letter, Warren also signifies her qualifications for friendship, thereby moving beyond "polite correspondence" to intimacy. As she explains to Janet Montgomery, "The sensibility of soul, the pathos of grief so strongly marked in your letters . . . are wrote with that elegance of *style*, that graceful diction which excites in me the

warmest wishes to continue the intercourse begun with a stranger, till it should deserve the sacred appellation of friendship" (L 37). What she does not value is "epistolary lumber" (L 45)—letters in quantity rather than quality. Originality, "some peculiarity of genius," is also required, because in spite of the enormous body of letters written over time, "there is still ample room for a descriptive pen to entertain its favoured correspondents in a way, useful, agreeable, and new" (L 49). As an artist, she sought an "equal balance in the exchange" (L 49) and understood that letters instantiated the friend when circumstances forbid her physical presence: "Yet social Beings, secluded from the converse of friendly minds, is an idea painful indeed and when in that friend we lose not only the pleasure of society, but the benefit of instruction and the lessons that lead to higher enjoyments, how tasteless is life, how dreary the world!" (L 44). Friendship was also a relationship she sought to cultivate with her sons as they grew to adulthood. She remarked to Winslow, "As I write with the warm emotions of maternal tenderness, strengthened by the reciprocalitie of friendship and confidence (a light in which at a certain stage I wish to view my sons) I shall touch the outlines of the character of a person concerning whom you lately inquired" (L 46).

The passage of time and maturing of human beings to which she refers in her letter to Winslow is indicative of Warren's attention to temporality. While letter writing as a genre is rooted in immediacy, in writing "of the moment" and linearly, Warren reveals the much more complex ways in which temporality is inflected in the letter—in terms of immediacy and memory, and as a theme.[16] The letter was particularly subject to the vagaries of war; it was an instrument intended to establish social reciprocity, but both chance and laws often hindered the delivery of letters.[17] As Warren explained to Montgomery in 1777 when she had taken eight months to respond to a letter, "The depredations made in the State of New York and the confusion into which that City has been thrown the Summer past, with the uncertain residence of its distressed inhabitants must be my apology for postponing to acknowledge the receipt of your very agreeable favour of March last" (L 37). Beyond the conventional immediacy of letter writing or challenges thereto, however, Warren's letters are a study in the ways in which war invokes a chaotic sense of temporality. She is not without a typical sense of time—whether bemoaning that "time in advance is beheld with rapture by youth, while age looks back with regret on the

past" (L 41) or simply acknowledging the difficulty of finding "a solitary hour" in which to write (L 41)—but she also views time philosophically: "There are certain seasons, in the lives of the greatest philosophers, and politicians, when the mind is releived, and gathers fresh vigor from trivial interruptions accidentally thrown in his way" (L 41). So, too, did she believe that time was a great leveler; in political terms, it was the instrument through which political machinations would be uncovered ("I think time must unravel some misteries which authority at present thinks best should be hushed in silence" [L 42]) or the tides of war altered ("How long before the sword that has spread devastation through some of our distressed cities will be resheathed, is an event enwrapped in the womb of futurity" [L 33]). But most prevalent among her analyses of the chaotic temporality in which she was living was her recognition that the future would be a very different place than the present. A new nation was being born, future generations would critique present actions and shape their own destinies thereby, and even the possibility of a future sometimes seemed questionable. Futurity defines the major theme of Warren's letters, such as when she is declaring, "Whether the Patriots of the present day will be able to effect their laudable designs in our time is very uncertain, yet I trust they will lay the foundation deep and that future generations will not be wanting to themselves, but will maintain and support the priviledges to which they are entitled both by nature and compact" (L 10), or lamenting, "The tryals of the day are severe indeed and the anticipations of future scenes of distress often fill with perturbations my too feeling mind" (L 26). She often cautions her sons to think temporally, as well; do not trust only to present pleasures or whimsical choices, she advises, as they can lead to decisions "which time nor even eternity can eradicate without bitter repentance" (L 7). And finally, she recognizes the significance of temporality in the realm of human happiness: "But I feel a secret check forbiding me to depend on any thing so precarious as human life: yet here do we build;—and reversionary happiness beyond the gay prospects of time is little estimated because less realized by the narrow and contracted perceptions of man" (L 4).

While letters provided Warren a means for working through many philosophical and political ideas, they also served as a means for articulating her own self-image. Perhaps no aspect of her letter writing is so intimately revealing as the self-portrait that emerges. Writing to her husband, she

expresses her fears that the Revolution may not succeed and that it may cost James his life:

> Timidity, Vexation, Grief & Resentment Alternately Rise in my disturbed Bosom yet I struggle to Resume[?] that Dignity of Character that philosophic & Religious Resignation you so often Recommend till I feel the Courage of an Heroine & the Intrepidity of a Roman Matron. But I am also[?] disolved into Weakness When I recollect that the Dissolution of the [??] may be at hand, that Every social joy is at stake & that I may be left a Naked helpless Vine without the Cedar or the Branches to Defend me from the Rude storms bent on the American shores. To fly thence[?] to the Last & the best Resource of the afflicted soul & Look up to my Maker & Benefactor for the Continuance of the blessings this providence has Lent or to prepare me for the Resumtion. (L 32)

Warren was also willing, when writing to a strong figure such as Catharine Macaulay, to sublimate her own sense of self—"It requires the pen of a Macaulay to have the origin, to paint the prime actors, and give the true colouring to the source and prosecution of a war kindled by avarice, whetted by ambition, and blown up into a thirst of revenge by repeated disappointments" (L 33)—although the precisely artistic phrasing of this assertion equally illuminates Warren's unspoken belief in her writing talents and political acuteness, as she later only half jokingly refers to herself in another letter to Macaulay as "a *rebel lady*" (L 35). Perhaps nothing so clearly demonstrates the mental anguish of an extended war than a later letter in which Warren reveals to James Warren the sorrow she feels over Winslow's plans to go abroad:

> I sometimes think I have but little more to do in this Theatre. The chearfulness of my mind is Broken by a long struggle to conform to what Necessity makes your Choice & which is so dissonant to my own Idea of Happiness & my pain increased by continued self Reproach that my Inclinations do not so Comport with my duty as to Enable me to wear a Countenance Ever brightened by the pride of Joy, when I know Nothing Contributes more to your happiness. My children leave me Early, & I seem to grow useless to them, & I am sometimes

> Ready to think you could serve the public as well & perhaps better unembarased by anxieties for me. I am not Hipocrite Enough to conceal the secret Regrets that prey upon my mind & Interrupt my peace though I have a Thousand times Resolved it for your sake. (L 50)

It was through her self-definition as a patriot and American that Warren could draw herself out of the anguish of loss. As many of her associates traveled abroad, Warren reconstructed herself as a "spectator" rather than an actor in this theater of change. But she was a discerning spectator, one who valued the rural over the metropolitan life and a national identity over the transnationalized rootedness that she saw Abigail Adams and others developing.[18] Not only is the rural life lively and satisfying for Warren, but it is where the artist can thrive, as she reveals to Montgomery in 1782:

> But if she [Montgomery] is again returned to rural life, to her favourite Hudson, where she will sometimes recollect the eastern hemisphere, tell her the season is gay and the life in vogue shines in all the lustre the climate will admit;—concerts, balls, water-parties, and routs at least four times a week. If this is not sufficient temptation to look this way, what weight in the scale will the still quiet reception, the warm welcome of a friendly heart by the unvariegated fire-side at Milton, have in the bosom of a young lady formed to adorn the publick circle, to tread the round of courtly life, and shine in the meridian of taste? Tell her to take up her pen and discuss the politicks, delineate the manners, give us the reigning characters both in the busy and in the fashionable world. I love her descriptions and leave the choice of subject to herself, only let her be assured her correspondence is prized by your friend. (L 63)

Indeed, both during and after the war, Warren began not only to articulate herself as an author and patriot but also to contemplate immortality—the most extreme construction of temporality. "The ornaments of life" and the hectic pace of the great metropolises of the world hold no allure: "Some may suppose the entrance on such a theatre of events, not only eligible, but enviable;—yet when the imagination has been a little time entertained by the bubbles of fancy, reason must sicken at the gaudy *nothing*, and long for the quiet enjoyment of a life more congenial to the felicity of beings

designed for immortality" (L 49). And it is, in the final analysis, the imagination of the artist that is revealed in Warren's letters.

Because there are so many Warren letters (which have not been thoroughly cataloged), our selection tells only part of Warren's story, but it allows her to do it in her own words. Serious students of Warren will seek out other volumes with other letters or consult the archives themselves. But for those who know of Warren only as the author of three political closet dramas or a few poems or the *History*, or not even as an author but as a footnote to John Adams, then perhaps this selection will reveal a more complex person than one sometimes encounters in the secondary literature, one capable of subtle rhetorical choices or unnerving habits of lecturing, given to flights of Augustan poetry or bursts of uncensored spleen. She rarely allows herself to be caught unguarded, but at the same time one hears in her letters the wheels at work, as she reaches for just the right phrase, the right note, the right tone, for the reader and the circumstance. Most important, Warren was a writer, writing almost daily for two decades, and although her public was often the single individual, she wrote for others and for posterity often enough that we hear in her work the larger forces of a dynamic culture under construction. And if a reader did not understand what Warren expected of her as a citizen of the new republic, she was not paying attention.

Notes

1. Warren (hereafter MOW in notes) has been the subject of several biographers, although she still awaits a published, large-scale modern biography. Alice Brown's *Mercy Warren* (New York: Scribner's, 1896), the first book-length biographical treatment, and Katharine Susan Anthony's *First Lady of the Revolution: The Life of Mercy Otis Warren* (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1958) have their interesting moments but rely on critical notions that now seem outdated. Jean Fritz's *Cast for a Revolution: Some American Friends and Enemies, 1728–1814* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1972), a kind of corporate biography with MOW at the center, is generally reliable, as is the short but cogent study by Rosemarie Zagarri, *A Woman's Dilemma: Mercy Otis Warren and the American Revolution* (Wheeling, Ill.: Harlan Davidson, 1995). See also the entries in the *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* and *American National Biography*, as well as Jeffrey H. Richards, *Mercy Otis Warren* (New York: Twayne, 1995), esp. 1–25, and Jill Marion Stauffer Maney, "A Bold Design: The Life of Mercy Otis Warren," PhD diss., University of Rochester, 2002.

2. On the bluestockings as a group, see Sylvia Harcstark Myers, *The Bluestocking Circle: Women, Friendship, and the Life of the Mind in Eighteenth-Century England* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1990).

3. Hereafter, letters in this volume will be referred to by L plus a number.

4. For a relatively balanced study of the Mercy Warren–Abigail Adams correspondence, see Philip Hicks, "Portia and Marcia: Female Political Identity and the Historical Imagination, 1770–1800," *William and Mary Quarterly* 62, no. 2 (2006): 265–94.

5. *Columbian Centinel*, 22 October 1814.

6. *Warren-Adams Letters: Being Chiefly a Correspondence among John Adams, Samuel Adams, and James Warren*, 2 vols., Massachusetts Historical Society Collections 72–73 ([Boston]: Massachusetts Historical Society, 1917–25); L. H. Butterfield et al., eds. *Adams Family Correspondence*, 7 vols. to date (Cambridge, Mass.: Belknap/Harvard University Press, 1963–); Robert J. Taylor et al., eds. *Papers of John Adams*, 13 vols. to date (Cambridge: Belknap/Harvard University Press, 1977–); C. Harvey Gardiner, ed., *A Study in Dissent: The Warren-Gerry Correspondence, 1776–1792* (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1968).

7. Charles F. Adams, ed., *Correspondence between John Adams and Mercy Warren* (1878; New York: Arno, 1972).

8. For an excellent study of the influence of letter-writing manuals, see Eve Tavor Bannet's *Empire of Letters: Letter Manuals and Transatlantic Correspondence, 1680–1820* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005).

9. The most popular of these volumes was Reverend Thomas Cooke's *The Universal Letter-Writer, or New Art of Polite Correspondence* (London: J. Cooke, 1770).

10. Janet Altman's *Epistolarity: Approaches to a Form* (Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 1982) instigated the theorizing of the formal characteristics of letter writing, and subsequent scholars have built on this influential work.

11. *Letters written by the late Right Honorable Philip Dormer Stanhope, Earl of Chesterfield, to his Son, Philip Stanhope* (Boston: Boyle and M'Dougall, 1779). See the remainder of her critique of Chesterfield's letters for her understanding of how these formal techniques could harbor "honeyed poison" and immorality (L 47).

12. The inclusion of this subject matter is an aspect of MOW's rejection of false feminine modesty; she also writes on the limited roles for women in late eighteenth-century society (e.g., L 41). Another common technique in her letters is to assert, "I will not say," and proceed to say precisely what might, through conventional conversation, be inappropriate for a woman to express.

13. See also Bannet, *Empire of Letters*, and Elizabeth Hewitt, *Correspondence and American Literature, 1770–1865* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004).

14. See, for example, the advice rendered to young women in Susanna Rowson's *Charlotte Temple* and Hannah Webster Foster's *The Coquette* and for young men in Charles Brockden Brown's *Edgar Huntley*.

15. For a study of the epistolary exchange between Warren and Macaulay, see Kate Davies, *Catharine Macaulay and Mercy Otis Warren: The Revolutionary Atlantic and the Politics of Gender* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005).

16. Altman, *Epistolarity*, 117; Sidonie Smith and Julia Watson, *Reading Autobiography: A Guide for Interpreting Life Narratives* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2001). As these theorists note, although letter writing is linear and inflected with immediacy, memories or narrative histories can still be integral to letter writing as well.

17. Hewitt, *Correspondence and American Literature*, 3.

18. *Transnationalized rootedness* is a term developed by editors Bruce S. Elliot, David A. Gerber, and Suzanne M. Sinke in *Letters across Borders: The Epistolary Practices of International Migrants* (New York: Palgrave, 2006) to indicate the attempt by migrants to maintain the customs of and contact with their homelands while establishing themselves in new communities.

EDITORIAL NOTE

The transcribed letters in this volume come largely from the Mercy Warren Papers at the Massachusetts Historical Society in Boston. Other letters come from other collections at MHS or from other archives; in every case, we note the provenance of the letter. Some of the letters are recipient copies (that is, the letters actually received); these are marked RC. Others are drafts in Warren's hand that she kept in her papers, either to transcribe later or simply to remind herself of what she said. These drafts, where comparison is possible, sometimes differ slightly from recipient copies. A number of letters, however, appear in a bound volume as transcribed by her son James Warren, most likely in the early 1800s, while he lived at the Warren home and served as postmaster for Plymouth. Because these often are the only versions of many letters, they are immensely valuable; but in some cases, the versions in what has come to be known as the Letterbook differ significantly from other extant drafts or recipient copies.

As an overall policy, we have preferred recipient copies, but we have decided to include Warren drafts (either in her hand or in that of James Warren) as well. This stems from our consideration of the letters as literary as well as historical texts. That is, a letter written as Warren may have wanted to remember writing it (versus the one she actually wrote) shows as much to a modern-day reader as does the version of a received letter. We have, therefore, printed a number of draft copies, knowing full well that they are not the precise letters received, because they also reveal Warren's attempt later in life to shape her own epistolary history. Insofar as they are documents reflecting views she held both at the time of original composition and later, they cannot be interpreted in precisely the same way as one

does a letter known to have been received by a correspondent. Footnotes indicate substantive differences from known recipient copies.

In some cases, too, especially with the Letterbook transcripts, the editors have supplied different conjectural dates from those provided in the draft copies. All conjectures are marked in brackets, with those that seem particularly speculative marked also with a question mark.

Warren's paragraphing also cannot always be determined. For instance, both she and her son will sometimes drop a succeeding sentence down half a line from the previous one as if a paragraph is to be marked; however, if the subject remains the same, we have not changed the paragraph until a surer sign appears, through the usual indentation or a clearly marked shift of subject. In some cases, the paragraph shift is conjectural; we try to honor Warren's consistency of thought on any one subject as much as possible.

Words underlined for emphasis in the originals we have italicized here: *lecture* on *buffoonery*. Words that cannot be read in the original because of damage to the page, wax seal, or other problems such as legibility are omitted and marked thus: [??]. Words that are hard to read but by reasonable conjecture appear to be what we transcribed are marked with a single question mark in brackets immediately after the word, as in the following example: honour[?]. Where Warren has inadvertently omitted a word, we place the conjectured addition in brackets, as here: do not [be] concerned. By the same token, we also use brackets for single letters added to words: our friend[s]. But we remind readers that transcription involves a certain level of interpretation of the marks, based on familiarity with script, and that some archival readers might produce different readings from ours, whether they concern the text marked with brackets or not.

One problem in Warren's writing is her use of uppercase initial letters. Of course, readers familiar with eighteenth-century typography recognize that, by and large, printers (and thus writers of manuscripts) in the earlier decades of the century in England and into the later decades in North America capitalized all nouns in a sentence. Warren follows that to some extent, but idiosyncratically also marks other words, including adjectives and adverbs, even articles, with what we would regard as capital letters. Sometimes, as with her letter *C*, for example, it is not always possible to tell which she intended. For the most part, we have capitalized nouns where she (or her amanuensis) did so, but where a capital letter seemed merely the tic of the writer (for example, where all initial *R*s are written

as capitals), we have not always followed Warren precisely. James Warren tends to be more regular in his copies than his mother was in her originals, and Mercy Warren herself also changed over time (as did the typography in the United States), reducing the number of words she began in uppercase. In some cases, however, her initial letters, even when intended as capitals, look lowercase, as in *p*. Thus her "plimouth" we have sometimes transcribed as "Plimouth."

Warren's punctuation is idiosyncratic or sometimes invisible. We have inserted commas and periods where the sense warrants but otherwise have tried to be guided by her usage. In some cases, we have added question marks to obvious question sentences, although in some longer, mixed-mode sentences, we have not always done so. When she quotes a passage from another author, we sometimes add closing quotation marks where she omits them. The addition of punctuation marks is our most intrusive alteration to Warren's manuscript and is generally not indicated in the notes.

Overall, we have tried to strike a balance between fidelity of transcription and readability of text. We follow her spellings, even when they are inconsistent within a single letter. Unless the context requires it, we have omitted using [*sic*] for words spelled differently from contemporary printer usage. Thus the spelling *veiw* is Warren's peculiarity, but a modern-day reader will understand what she means without further demarcation. She rarely uses abbreviations such as *yt* for *that*, but in such cases we have usually expanded it to the familiar spelling of her era. In other cases, where in drafts or copies she has inserted notes written at a later time, we include those in footnotes rather than in the text proper.

We have followed her dating and address patterns as far as possible, but where information is omitted in the original, we have included it in brackets. In some cases, we have replaced erroneous dates with more likely ones, also marked by brackets.

As for all other matters that require footnotes, we have relied on the biographical sources listed in the introduction, standard biographical dictionaries, contemporary newspapers, and other sources as listed. We have tried not to clutter the text with too many explanatory notes but to identify where possible individuals who are not well known or whose actions or situations are not obvious in context. In some cases, we cannot identify individuals at all, especially when she uses code, as in some letters to her son Winslow. We also try as best we can to supply citations for quotations of

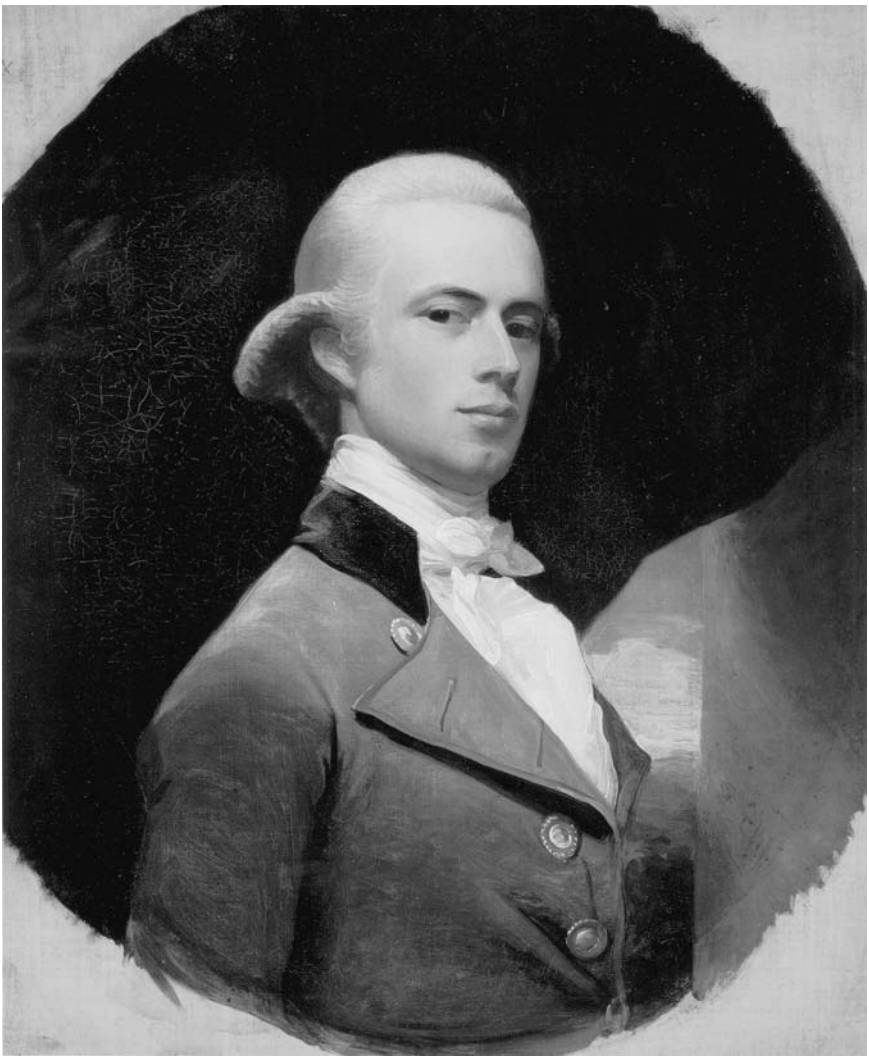
verse or Bible passages. Headnotes provide some biographical information and slight narrative stitching to help place letters in context.

We use the following abbreviations in notes:

AA	Abigail Adams
AFC	*Adams Family Correspondence*, ed. L. H. Butterfield et al. 6 vols. Cambridge, Mass.: Belknap/Harvard University Press, 1963– .
CFP3	Cary Family Papers 3, MHS
JA	John Adams
JO2	James Otis Jr. (Mercy's brother)
JTP	John Thomas Papers, MHS
JW	James Warren (Mercy's husband)
JW2	James Warren Jr. (son of Mercy and James)
MHS	Massachusetts Historical Society
MOW	Mercy Otis Warren
MWP1	Mercy Warren Papers, reel 1 (the Letterbook transcripts), MHS
MWP2	Mercy Warren Papers, reel 2 (separate letters and drafts), MHS
PJA	*Papers of John Adams*, ed. Robert J. Taylor et al. 8 vols. Cambridge, Mass.: Belknap/Harvard University Press, 1977– .
RC	Recipient copy
JTP	John Thomas Papers, MHS
WAL	*Warren-Adams Letters: Being Chiefly a Correspondence among John Adams, Samuel Adams, and James Warren*. 2 vols. Massachusetts Historical Society Collections 72–73. [Boston]: MHS, 1917–25.
WW	Winslow Warren (son of Mercy and James)

Mrs. James Warren (Mercy Otis), c. 1763, by John Singleton Copley, oil on canvas, 49⅝ × 39½ in. (Bequest of Winslow Warren, Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, 31.212; photograph © 2009 Museum of Fine Arts, Boston)

Portrait of James Otis, 1855, by W. G. Jackman, engraving, $8\frac{9}{16} \times 5\frac{7}{8}$ in. (Harvey D. Parker Collection, Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, 57.708; photograph © 2009 Museum of Fine Arts, Boston)



Winslow Warren, 1785, by John Singleton Copley, oil on canvas, 30¼ × 25⅛ in. (Gift of Winslow Warren, Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, P12557; photograph © 2009 Museum of Fine Arts, Boston)

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1 TO JAMES OTIS JR.

[Although MOW had been writing letters before this date, she only preserved drafts and originals from 1769 forward. To some extent, her conscious writing career begins with the event referred to in the following letter. On September 5, 1769, her brother James (1725–83), a brilliant lawyer who had made an early argument for comprehensive colonial rights in the Writs of Assistance case, was attacked in Boston by a political enemy and employee of the British Crown, customs commissioner John Robinson, and beaten severely with a cane. Otis, who already suffered to some extent from mental illness, never recovered his profession or influence after the assault. As biographers have noted, his sister seems to have picked up her brother's mantle as he declined in public importance.]

Plymouth [c. September 10, 1769][1]

My dear Brother

You know not what I have suffered for you within the last twenty four hours—I saw you fallen—slain by the hands of merciless men.—I saw your wife a widow, your children orphans, your friends weeping round you, and your country in tears for the man who had sacrificed interest, health, and peace, for the public weal,—but my distress was this evening alleviated by hearing that your life is now not despaired of.

I wish to know every circumstance of the guilty affair;—is it possible that we have men among us under the guise of officers of the Crown, who have become open assassins?—Have they with a band of ruffians at the heels, attacked a gentleman alone and unarmed with a design to take away his life? Thus it is reported:—and are these the *conservators* of peace? We knew before that the business on which this armament was sent hither was detestable:—that it was abhorred by every one, who had any remains of integrity, humanity, or any ideas of freedom. Yet though we knew their errand was to uphold villany, and protect villains—I believe few expected they would carry their audacity so far as to stand by and [??] the miscreant, to spill the blood of citizens, who criminate the designs, and their measures.

Thanks to the unering hand which directs and overrules every event, the blow was not fatal, or to use one of their own expressions, the vilest of them can *go no futher than the length of their tether*. When public affairs are in such a situation, how happy is it for the man of public avocations to have the answer of a good conscience?—This I trust you have—and though your conflicts are many[?] and severe yet I doubt not but in your calm moments you can retire into your own breast, and there find that principle of uprightness and benevolence, which ought to actuate, and which only can support you, and bear you above all opposition. You have long and painfully struggled to promote the interest of your country, thousands are thanking you therefor, and daily praying for the preservation of your life. To theirs let me add my most earnest solicitations that when you recover, you will never either give or receive a challenge from any man on earth, let his rank and character be what it may. This I urge for the sake of your lovely babes, for the sake of your worthy and venerable Father, for the sake of your many tender friends, and for that of this people who stand in need of your assistance.[2]

Whatever may have been said of the laws of honour, false honour indeed—I am certain that the law of reason and the laws of God as well as man strictly forbid the practice of dueling. If assaulted it is your duty: and if on even ground you are able to defend yourself. I am not about to inform you, who have so much knowledge and understanding, what is legal, just, or rational, in any action;—but with a sisterly affection I must entreat that you would never let either public oppression or private wrongs, the injustice of a few in power, or the folly of the many that are out, ruffle and discompose a man, whose superior abilities are such that with a calm and steady mind, he is capable of promoting the greatest good to his fellow creatures—and in consequence thereof to secure to himself, eternal felicity.

You will excuse the freedom of my pen, when you consider it held by one who has your welfare more at heart, after a very few exceptions, than that of any other person in the world. I hope soon to hear that you are restored to perfect health and from your usual affection and attention. I expect this intelligence from your own hand as soon as you are able to write.

I now only add my fervent prayers for the most permanent happiness to you and yours. As ever I subscribe your most affectionate
Sister,
Mercy Warren

MWP1[3]

1. The letter reads "1770," but the beating of James Otis by the customs official Robinson took place in early September 1769; it is unlikely MOW would have waited several months to respond to an event she learned of quickly.

2. MOW refers to JO2's daughters, Elizabeth and Mary, and Mercy and James's father, Colonel James Otis.

3. This letter exists as a copy of a draft in what has commonly been referred to as the Letterbook, a collection of MOW letters copied out by her son James. See the Editorial Note for discussion of the problems this text presents. At the top of this letter is written "To the Hon[ble] M[r] Otis after the abuse of Robinson and party—."

2 TO JAMES WARREN

[MOW had married James Warren (1726–1808) of Plymouth, a Harvard graduate, in 1754; by 1772, they had produced five sons and had become a prominent family in town. JW often traveled for reasons of governmental business and thus became the recipient of a number of MOW letters. Many of their letters reflect the late eighteenth-century understanding of the "companionate" marriage, one in which the couple forms a kind of partnership of friends, both of whom are committed to the welfare not only of the family but also of society. Such a marriage begged a near equality, at least in the eyes of each partner, and JW appears to have supported MOW in her efforts both to run the household and to enter into public political debate through her writing.]

Plimouth April 22 1772

The fond and affectionate friend of my heart tho absent but a day will doubtless think me inexcusable if I omit to let him know that I am as well as when he left me. All the pain I have suffer'd since that time is on

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The fond and affectionate friend of my heart tho absent but a day will doubtless think me inexcusable if I omit to let him know that I am as well as when he left me. All the pain I have suffer'd since that time is on

his account. The impetuous Hurricane[1] of yesterday shook my trembling heart when I considered one exposed to its pearcing Blasts whose health is precarious and yet all my earthly Happiness depending on the continuance of his life but I will hope you escaped every ill effect from this circumstance and that you will soon return Both well & happy.

My Family is greatly Lesson'd for besides the alteration of Teusday I've consented to let Henry go to Barnstable this morning with mr N. Winslow[2] but do not [*be*] concerned about me. I find some of the ancients most exclent company, whilst others are holding up to veiw the wickedness of mankind in its Blackest array at the same time teaching the Vanity of all Human greatness.

And now I have got to the bottom of my page I shall conclude or follow my own inclination and fill another. If you will promise not to Laugh at the scribler (as you sometimes call her) I will go on to inform you (as the only peace of inteligence I can think of) that I had the agreable company of miss P Winslow last Night who proposes to continue this kindness through the week and Let me just observe that I think this is not a singular instance of a whig and a Tory Lodging in the same bed and believe there are very few instances where there is so great regard for Each other as between the parties above mention'd.[3]

Gardning goes on finely to day under the direction and assistance of your industrious son who refused to go to Barnstable least he shou'd by it Loose the opportunity of going when his Aunt Otis comes. You know his great affection for that Lady to whom my best regards when you see her.

Thursday Evening. I supose you are by this time much Engaged in politicks. Wishing you may help to stear the ship right I take Leave for the present only repeating that I am with the same respect & reason as usual your affectionate Wife

Mercy Warren

MWP2, RC

1. Given the date, by "Hurricane" she means strong wind, possibly a nor'easter. Hurricanes occasionally hit New England, but not at this early date in the season.

2. Her son Henry (1764–1828) is going possibly with Edward "Ned" Winslow Jr. (1746–1815), son of Edward Winslow (1713–84), a leading Tory in Plymouth. JW's mother, Penelope, was born a Winslow.

3. Although the Warrens and Winslows were both old families connected by blood as

well as social ties, they divided increasingly over politics. Mary "Polly" Winslow (i.e., "miss P Winslow"), the daughter of Tory Pelham Winslow, a cousin to Edward Winslow, later married MOW's son Henry. Barnstable is the Otis stronghold; a visit there meant seeing Henry's grandfather James Otis and extended family.

3 TO JAMES WARREN JR.

[Although JW had graduated from Harvard (as his father had before him), only one of his and MOW's five sons had that distinction: the oldest, James (1757–1821). This is the first known of many advice letters that MOW will send to her sons during the next two decades.]

[Plymouth, September? 1772]

To a youth just entered Colledge

If my dear son was sensible her affection runs so great she never could forget him while she remembered any thing, he might be apt to suspect it from the late unusual silence of his mother; but a variety of cares united with an indifferent state of health since you last left me has prevented by renewed precepts to endeavour to fortify the mind of a youth who I flatter myself is well disposed against the snares of vice and the contagion of bad example, which like an army of scorpions lie in wait to destroy.[1] I do not much fear that I shall ever be subjected to much disappointment or pain for any deviation in a son like yourself. Yet when I consider how easily the generallity of youth are misled, either by novel opinions or unprincipled companions and how easily they often glide into the path of folly and how imperceptibly led into the mazes of error; I tremble for my children. Happy beyond expression will you be my son, if amidst the laudable pursuits of youth and its innocent amusement you ever keep that important period in view which must wind up this fleeting existence, and land as on that boundless shore, when the profligate can no longer sooth himself in the silken dream of pleasure, or the infidel entertain any farther doubts of the immortality of his deathless soul. May the Great Gaurdian of Virtue, the source, the fountain of everlasting truth watch over and ever preserve you from the baleful walks of vice, and the devious and not less baneful track of the bewildered sceptic. What vigilance is necessary, when the solicitations of

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thoughtless companions on the one side, and the clamour of youthful passions on the other, plead for deviations and ever stand ready to excuse the highest instances of indulgence to depraved appetite. If you escape uncontaminated it must be in some measure by learning early to discriminate between the unoffending mirth of the generous and open hearted and the designed flighty vagaries of the virulent and narrow minded man.

My regards to your fellow student; tell him I feel interested in his welfare, not only as your companion, but from some partiallity towards him. May you assist each other in your resolutions to repel every temptation to folly and while you are mutually aiding each other in your researches into the several branches of useful knowledge may you form a friendship founded on the most durable basis, a similitude of sentiment in your invariable adherence to every moral and religious obligation.

You will take the earliest opportunity to write to your affectionate mother.

[no signature]

MWP2, draft?[2]

1. MOW had reason for her concerns. Harvard students were known for their rowdiness, but two incidents involving Harvard students in 1770—one, a case of breaking and entering and assault; the other, a case of students assaulting a deputy sheriff—had raised concerns about the "antics" of the student body. See Theodore Chase, "Harvard Student Disorders in 1770," *New England Quarterly* 61, no. 1 (March 1988), 25–54.

2. This letter, in MOW's hand, may be a draft, since it lacks a signature. At bottom is written "To J. Warren." Another draft can be found in the Letterbook, which may in fact be based on this one. Note also that the Warrens did not distinguish family members of the same name with Roman numerals or Jr./Sr. JW's father was also named James, and thus technically his son would be James III. However, because JW2's grandfather plays almost no role in this book, we have chosen to distinguish JW2 here as Jr.

4 TO HANNAH FAYERWETHER TOLMAN WINTHROP

[One of MOW's closest correspondents during the 1770s, Hannah Winthrop (1726–90) of Cambridge, was, like MOW, an intellectual with a companionate marriage. She was married to a close

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political associate of JW's, John Winthrop, the Hollis Professor of Astronomy at Harvard. Because the Warrens and Winthrops shared Whiggish politics, MOW is often more candid with Hannah than with other female correspondents whose families tended toward Toryism.[1]]

Plymouth February 1773

My dear Madam,

The desire of appearing in an advantageous light in the eyes[?] of our fellow creatures is I presume a laudable passion: and where that ambition prevails not in the highest degree, yet there is generally a wish to stand well in the opinion of those we most esteem. This may be the reason why they are the last to discover any particular foible, to which their friends may be addicted.

This united with conscious inability of executing in a manner deserving of approbation of the judicious, has made me studious to conceal the taste you have discovered for poetic composition. But as the secret is disclosed[?], and you have expressed a wish to see the description of your late agreeable eastern *tour*, in the dress of rhyme it excited a similar inclination in the bosom of one who has long been united in sentiment, in affection, and simpathy, both in the moments of your anxiety and your felicity. But my dear madam prone as are my sex (and indeed all mankind) to *vanity*: I never[?] entertained so chimerical an idea as to suppose it in my power greatly to amuse;—much less to benefit the world by the unstudied composition of my leisure hours. I am gratified in the completion of highest wish in that respect, if enabled by my pen to give pleasure to a little circle of very valuable friends if you had ever thought that my most sanguine expectation carried me beyond that line, would it not have been kind to have checked the fond imagination? I am sensible the world is already full of elegant productions that entertain the imagination and refine the taste; yet perhaps the world so little reformed even by the laboured treatises of some very scientific philosophers; much less can it be expected from the airy compositions of the many superficial writers of the age. I would not willingly make an addition to the last useless class, and despairing of eminence in the first I rather choose my manuscripts should lie in the cabinets of my friend to be perused when nothing more instructive or entertaining may offer.

The enclosed was attempted as the amusement of a lonely hour and though not executed to my own satisfaction, I venture to put it into the hands of friends at cambridge more as a mark of confidence in their candour than from an opinion of its merit.[2] They will see thereby at least that I participated in their pleasure, in their late journey to a neighbouring state[?]. I thank you for the descriptive view of the plentious fields and the beautiful variety of prospects on your way.

The reflections of your compassionate heart on the impending ruin which threatens the whole are spirited and just, every uncorrupt mind must spurn the rod of oppression[?] held over this once happy people, and feel an honest indignation: when he beholds the harpies[3] preying on the country that nourished them. Yet who can but pity at the same time they despise the nefarious group, collected in another province to give sanction to measures without law, and to carry into execution the wicked projects of administration.[4]

Can accumulated wealth or honour, make the enemies of their country happy? Has the moral sovereign that used to preside in every breast, laid aside his scepter in theirs, and left their minds in a state of anarchy and darkness, without one friendly ray to lead them back to the paths of duty and patriotism?

Tired of surveying the depravity of human nature, let us reverse the model. When we have seen the splendid wretch, for the elevation of an hour sacrificing the rights of posterity, sickned by his ambition and avarice; let us contrast it with the rational satisfaction of the good man, who exerts all his talents for the benefit of society.[5] We see his bosom tranquillized by a consciousness that every step tends to secure an immortality, where a full display of knowledge as well as the perfection of virtue will open on his admiring soul. How sublime must be the intervening pleasures of him who anticipates this felicity, whose

> Thoughts rove o're the vast aethereal plain
> Searching each system of the wide domain
> The secret depths of nature's hidden laws
> And soars with *Newton* to the great first course.

With my profound respects to the astronomer and philosopher you will add my regards to my *friend*, and tell D^r^ Winthrop[6] I hope his visit will not be postponed until the arrival of the amiable young gentleman he so

warmly recommends, as the joys of life are not sown thick enough for me to expect two such agreeable events as a visit from him, and my son, should at once take place. Tell him if you please it is my opinion "that *Philolethes*'[7] prostituted pen" can give little consolation to the cankered bosom of the betrayer of his country.

The wounds of a goaded conscience cannot be healed by such emollients, nor by pecuniary gratuities, sonorous titles, or the flattering tongue of the sycophant. He may throw over a shade but he cannot thicken it sufficiently to cover the guilt of the delinquent.

Neither you or Doctor Winthrop need to be told that my mortification was equal to yours, that we did not meet in the Capital: but after the first regrets of disappointment subside, the delusory phantom *hope* is ever presenting something to our imagination that makes a kind of balance to the most mortifying incidents. Thus has she soothed my mind on this occasion by whispering that my friends will be more solicitous to [??] me a visit on the first opening of spring. But I feel a secret check forbiding me to depend on any thing so precarious as human life: yet here do we build;—and reversionary happiness beyond the gay prospects of time is little estimated because less realized by the narrow and contracted perceptions of man.
I am most sincerely your friend
M Warren

MWP1

1. For an account of the Mercy Warren–Hannah Winthrop correspondence, see Frances Herman Lord, "Harvard Once Removed: The 'Favorable Situation' of Hannah Winthrop and Mercy Otis Warren," in *Yards and Gates: Gender in Harvard and Radcliffe History* (New York: Palgrave, 2004), 39–52.

2. This willingness to write a poem (although which poem is not clear) for such political allies as the Winthrops and the Adamses contrasts sharply with her unwillingness to pen one for Sarah Hesilrige in a subsequent letter (L 8).

3. From Greek mythology, the Harpies were fierce monsters with hideous female faces on vulturelike bodies.

4. Comment added at end of letter: "an illegal court erected at Newport." This may refer to the attempts in Rhode Island to enforce the Sugar Act through admiralty court proceedings during the latter 1760s—cases that involved the Otis family enemy, John Robinson, then collector of customs at Newport. Rhode Islanders objected that the courts in America were more punitive than those in Britain and therefore were unconstitutional. However,

the main admiralty court itself was located in Halifax, too far away for convenient prosecution, leading to the use of local courts instead to try sugar smugglers. Therefore, by date and by location, it may more likely refer to the Gaspee Commission, established by King George III to find out the culprits in the burning of the British ship *Gaspee* and send them to England for trial. The commission held its first formal meetings in January 1773. See David S. Lovejoy, *Rhode Island Politics and the American Revolution, 1760–1776* (Providence, R.I.: Brown University Press, 1958), 40–47, 158–65.

5. Although MOW does not indicate specific persons, she means to contrast the supporters of Governor Thomas Hutchinson to anti-administration people like the Warrens and Winthrops, a rhetorical point she will use for nearly the rest of her writing career.

6. Hannah's husband, John Winthrop, whose importance as one of the leading scientists in America MOW celebrates in the poetic fragment she quotes. Although the phrase "vast ethereal" occurs in Milton's *Paradise Lost*, the lines here appear to be her own.

7. Note added at bottom of page: "Jonathan Sewall a notorious scribler in favour of Bernard and Hutchinson." Jonathan Sewall wrote a number of political compositions for the loyalist side using the pen name Philalethes. Although he used that pen name occasionally before this date, Sewall's most important Philalethes writings came later in the year, in defense of Thomas Hutchinson, after publication of private letters showed Hutchinson seemed to desire suppression of colonial freedoms. The note refers also to the absentee royal governor, Francis Bernard, whom MOW tarred with nearly the same brush as she did Hutchinson. Sewall was a supporter of Governor Bernard and was appointed sole judge of admiralty in Massachusetts at Bernard's behest. James Otis openly opposed Sewall's appointment and what MOW termed "the dangerous aspect of this court" for the colonies (*History of the Rise, Progress, and Termination of the American Revolution* [Boston: Larkin, 1805], 1:47).

5 TO HANNAH FAYERWETHER TOLMAN WINTHROP

Plymouth April 1773

How often have my worthy friends been called to exhibit the most painful part of the drama of life. But as they have hitherto acquitted themselves to the general approbation of the spectators on this little theatre of action I have no doubt they will obtain that also of the Judge of every excellence;—what an ample recompence this, for the most disquieting movements we can suffer in this temporary existence.

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If I have forgot to whom I am writing, and have insensibly addressed myself not only to my dear Mrs Winthrop—but to one whose life enforces the precepts of christianity, while his learning and abilities give a specimen of the heights to which the human mind is capable of soaring, he will forgive the ebullitions of friendship, ready to streach[1] its weak hand where it is least needed.

Are you my dear madam in danger of sinking into melancholy with such a preceptor by your side? Shall the possession of distinguished advantages be a reason for imbittering the present enjoyments, by a dread of a resumption?

But alas! the imbecillity of my own mind! I would endeavour to assist my friend to arm her against the day of sorrow, yet at the same moment, do I not anticipate for myself the same evils deprecated by my *friend*. I am convinced of my own folly, and would persuade her to be less apprehensive of probable afflictions.

Notwithstanding the wasted health of those we hold most dear, they may yet live to weep over our dissolving frames and send the mournful sigh after the scattered particles of dust, long after the darksome tomb has hidden us from them and from the world.[2]

You are not mistaken when you think I bear a part with you in the infelicities, and the comforts that are allotted you. I most sincerely wish that the ray of hope which you observe has lately smiled upon you may be brightened and multiplied to the extent of your wishes.

In answer to another part of your late letter, I must tell you you judge right when you imagine I would not exchange my retired manner of life for the elegant refinements of modern dissipation. Indeed I am at present so distant from the centre of polite amusements, that I know not who you mean by a late *lecture* on *buffoonery*;—yet I think the farce of every day discovers innumerable puppets, who after having danced their hour amid the gazing multitude, retire from the stage to all appearance as little conscious of the great purposes of rationality as the figures that adorn the dear scene.[3]

I will only observe that I believe the grand pantomime in politics must get his springs retouched[?], and a new note[?] added to the tune of passive obedience, before he will be able to lull the guardians of American liberty

in an acquiescence to his measures, or an approbation of his laborious speeches to prove the people the property of arbitrary and distant Lords.
I am affectionately yours
M Warren[4]

MWP1

1. I.e., stretch.

2. John Winthrop was often ill in the years before his death in 1779, and his health is frequently the subject of Warren–Winthrop correspondence.

3. One of several uses of theatrical imagery in her letters, this passage refers specifically to the tight-knit circle of loyalists around Hutchinson, whom MOW despised for being interested only in preferment, not in serving the people.

4. An asterisked note at the end remarks, "Referring to Hutchinsons dispute with the house on the parliamentary right of taxing the Colonies." At this time, the acting governor affirmed royal prerogative to tax colonists without their consent, violating a long tradition of self-taxation enjoyed by the colonial assembly. The lower house in Massachusetts had grown increasingly antagonistic toward Hutchinson over this point.

6 TO CATHARINE SAWBRIDGE MACAULAY

[Catharine Macaulay (1731–91), a well-known Whig historian in Britain, had been corresponding with American political figures for several years, including John Adams and James Otis Jr. Because JO2 had by this time lost his ability to function, MOW appears to have picked up where he left off, as she suggests quite explicitly in the following letter, beginning a relationship that lasted until Macaulay's death nearly twenty years later. MOW found much to admire in Macaulay: she was, after all, a prominent and public historian at a time when relatively few women were, and her history of the Stuart monarchies served as an important transatlantic statement of Whig principles. This is the first letter from MOW.]

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1. I.e., stretch.

2. John Winthrop was often ill in the years before his death in 1779, and his health is frequently the subject of Warren–Winthrop correspondence.

3. One of several uses of theatrical imagery in her letters, this passage refers specifically to the tight-knit circle of loyalists around Hutchinson, whom MOW despised for being interested only in preferment, not in serving the people.

4. An asterisked note at the end remarks, "Referring to Hutchinsons dispute with the house on the parliamentary right of taxing the Colonies." At this time, the acting governor affirmed royal prerogative to tax colonists without their consent, violating a long tradition of self-taxation enjoyed by the colonial assembly. The lower house in Massachusetts had grown increasingly antagonistic toward Hutchinson over this point.

6 TO CATHARINE SAWBRIDGE MACAULAY

[Catharine Macaulay (1731–91), a well-known Whig historian in Britain, had been corresponding with American political figures for several years, including John Adams and James Otis Jr. Because JO2 had by this time lost his ability to function, MOW appears to have picked up where he left off, as she suggests quite explicitly in the following letter, beginning a relationship that lasted until Macaulay's death nearly twenty years later. MOW found much to admire in Macaulay: she was, after all, a prominent and public historian at a time when relatively few women were, and her history of the Stuart monarchies served as an important transatlantic statement of Whig principles. This is the first letter from MOW.]

Plymouth June 9th 1773

Impressed with a strong sense of the natural rights of mankind, which your masterly pen has so finely delineated, you will permit me to address you, and though conscious inferiority checks the ambitious hope of a long correspondence, yet may I not claim the indulgence as the wish arises from the love and admiration of superior merit.

I am led to flatter myself with a favourable reception both from the knowledge I have of your respect for some persons in this country and from that generous principle of regard to universal happiness so conspicuous in your works.

The feelings of sympathy in your benevolent heart have been discovered on several occasions when you have surveyed the system of oppression formed against the injured Americans.

Has the Genius of liberty which once pervaded the bosom of each British hero animating them to the worthiest deeds forsaken that devoted Island;—or has she only concealed her lovely form untill some more happy period shall bid her lift her avenging hand to the terror of every arbitrary despot and to the confusion of their impious minions on each side of the Atlantic?

Give me leave to ask what Ideas arise in your mind when your imagination reaches this once peaceful asylum of freedom; of freedom to an intrepid race whose glorious love of liberty prompted them to explore the uncultivated wild and with a degree of fortitude and patience that would have done honour to the annals of Sparta and of Rome, independently[?] secure in this invaluable purchase to their posterity? What a [??] of the pleasing prospect! The rapacious arm of tyranny has now seized and is devouring the fair inheritance, and what adds to the just indignation of every lover of his country is that while his land is groaning under the yoke of foreign servitude many of her treacherous sons, dead to more laudable feelings of soul, are stretching out their miscreant hands to fix the chain on a people, to whom they are indebted by innumerable obligations.

Hence appears a general alienation of affection where harmony has been long used to erect her graceful head, and every worthy heart is daily disgusted by fresh instances of venality, which from the contaminated fountain of Government is conveyed through this corrupted channel, and like a rushing torrent threatens desolation to the mighty Empire.

What fatal infatuation has seized the parent state that she is thus making illegal encroachments on her loyal subjects, and by every despotic measure urging these populous, brave, and extensive colonies, to a vigorous union in defence of their invaded rights.

But I turn from the painful portrait and pray Heaven may yet avert the dread calamity of Civil War; and prevent the sad alternative of either bowing beneath the *bands* of slavery or of repurchasing our plundered rights by the blood of *the* virtuous citizens.

I doubt not of your candour and ready pardon for this free communication of sentiment from a person wholly unknown to you, and when assured Madam, it is from one whose bosom has been long warmed with affection and respect for your distinguished literary character, I promise myself the favour of a line.

I thank you for the marks of esteem you have heretofore shown to a brother of mine, a Gentleman, eminent for his remarkable exertion of ability in behalf of the expiring liberties of his country. He has not lately been able to make those acknowledgments that are justly in your due; yet I hope he may one day be in a capacity to answer the highest demands that either friendship or society may claim.

Our friend, Mr. Jno. Adams, through whose hand this is conveyed, has informed me that when he last had the pleasure of hearing from you, you was taken off by an interruption of health from that application to letters which has contributed so much to the pleasure and benefit of mankind.

My unremitting prayers shall be for a restoration of health and a continuation of life to a lady whose elegant writings reflect so much lustre on her sex.

If a short relaxation does not produce the desired effect, I understand you have it in contemplation to honour these distant regions with a visit.

Among the many that will hail you welcome to the American shore, there is no one who will more sincerely rejoice at the pleasing event if consistent with the happiness of Mrs. Macaulay than her great admirer[?]
& Very Humble Servt.
Mercy Warren

MWP1

7 TO JAMES WARREN JR.

Plymouth, [c. July] 1773

My dear Child,

At the same time that I feel a truly sympathetic sorrow for the afflicted parents who are now mourning the sudden death of one of your young companions, my heart overflows with gratitude to the great preserver of man, that he hath thus far protected you from the unforeseen evils that continually await us.

Little did the heedless youth think when he dived into the cool and pleasing stream[1] that he was taking a leap into the eternal world, into a new state of existence, where his condition would be instantly and unalterably fixed. I sincerely pray that this instance of the brevity of life, may be improved to the permanent interest of the youth of the Academy of which my son is a member. Consider, my child, that though you may escape the danger so recently fatal to one of your class, yet there are ten thousand avenues that lead down to death. But while you reflect on this gloomy subject, may conscious integrity, and a firm trust in that being who has guarded you thus far, animate you to an endeavour to persevere in the path of duty, diligently striving to mend the heart and to improve your morals at the same time that you are improving the means to cultivate your understanding. Then will neither the contemplation nor the approach of death, give much anxiety to a mind constantly acting on such principles. My tenderness towards you,—my concern for your present and future happiness, might lead me to say much more on this interesting subject,—but to a well disposed mind, the least hint will be treasured up and usefully improved, especially when impressed from the lip of a fond mother whose peace the remainder of her life depends on the behaviour and well being of her children.

More particularly attentive I am to the character and conduct of my eldest son not only because he has an equal share of my affections, with his other brothers but because the honour of the whole depends in some measure at least for a time, on the behaviour and example of the eldest branch of a family. You have hitherto given us reason to hope that your diligence and application will crown the wishes of your parents;—may you be more and more careful as you advance to maturity, to improve the

passing moments, to ripen your judgment, and mature the principles of virtue, which I hope are implanted deep in your breast.

As you now reside constantly in the Academy, amidst a number of thoughtless,—and many of them unprincipled youth, you are much in the way of temptation and folly. Yet, alas such is the world, that every year which rolls over your head will bring with it new allurements to vice. Remember that when once the barriers are broken down, and the bounds prescribed to virtue can be overleaped without *horror*, there is danger that a mind thus perverted will never recover the tranquillity that arises from innocence. Pushed on by the eager desire of happiness, which reigns in every bosom, he may feel it in guilty gratifications which only plunge deeper in misery, and leave a thorn in his breast, which time nor even eternity can eradicate without bitter repentance.

Think then my son, whither all your steps tend;—and let not the frequency of ill examples, the clamour of unruly passions, nor the persuasive arguments of evil tongues contaminate your morals. Often reflect on the superior pleasure you will enjoy, if when you have finished the term allotted for the completion of your studies, you can look inward and feel no remorse for any criminal action, and outward with a hopeful prospect of advantage to yourself and usefulness to others from an unblemished character and the testimony of a good conscience. Then will you meet all around you with the assurance of the approbation of the judicious and virtuous, a happy token that you will finally obtain the plaudit of the judge of all our ways, who sees the secret springs of all the actions of man.

I am not apprehensive that you will ever willfully cause the painful disappointment to yours that some unhappy parents feel,—who if their sons do not fall into gross errors, they yet have the mortification to see them more attentive to external appearance than to the due improvement of reason;—squandering the precious moments in idle amusements—more solicitous for outward decorations of person than the cultivation of their understanding or the governments of their hearts.

Happy indeed is that youth who can give an hour to innocent relaxation without contracting habits of indolence,—who can so adjust his deportment and manners as to become agreeable to the polite and well bred, at the same time, he considers those embelishments as but small appendages to the man of worth.

It is necessary to know something of the world—much of books, but much more of our own hearts to enter and tread safely the walk of life. The knowledge of the world teaches to shun the snares thrown out to the unwary and unsuspecting, and qualifies to become more amiable companions than if confined wholly to books. But the knowledge of ourselves my son is a science of higher importance;—this teaches to resist the impulse of appetite, to check the sallies of passion, at the same time that it leads to certain permanent happiness and renders us useful to society.

I conclude with the tender wishes of a parent full of expectation and hope, and with the fond affection and concern of a mother, who when writing to her children knows scarcely when to stop and subscribe the name of
M Warren

P.S. I leave you at liberty to determine for yourself relative to inoculating for the small pox.[2] Yet wish you to trust more in the providential eye that superintends, than in the success that others boast. Yet, that circumstance ought to give a degree of confidence; as the hand of heaven has been held out favourable to many, it seems to point at this alleviation of a distemper that has been formerly so fatal.

MWP1

1. Note in Letterbook draft, probably supplied by JW2 himself: "Young Padock drowned in Cambridge River." John Paddock, the son of Adino Paddock, a well-known merchant and local political figure in Boston, was a Harvard classmate of JW2's. He drowned during a swimming accident in the Charles River (which flows past Harvard in Cambridge) on June 24, 1773. JW2 and the rest of his class attended the funeral on Saturday, June 26. See *Boston Post-Boy*, June 28, 1773.

2. Whether he received an inoculation for smallpox at this time is not entirely clear, but the rest of the sons were inoculated later. See letter to James Warren, November 24, 1776 (L 31).

8 TO SARAH WALTER HESILRIGE

[Possibly through her brother Joseph's marriage to Maria Walter, MOW became acquainted with Maria's sister, Lady Sarah Hesilrige (spelled variously), the wife of Sir Arthur Hesilrige. Born in 1736, Sarah Walter was the daughter of Reverend Nathaniel Walter. At the time of their correspondence, Sarah lived in Roxbury, but she appears to have removed to England sometime just before the Revolution.[1] The following letter contains MOW's only known commentary on her fellow Massachusetts poet Phillis Wheatley.]

Plymouth [c. December 1773 or March 1774][2]

How true is the observation of the poet—"Procrastination is the thief of time." I find it verified in myself in a thousand instances, of more importance than any return I can make to your last agreeable favour. Happy indeed should we all feel had we no self upbraidings, but what arise from such slight causes, as a deficiency in the etiquette of an epistolary intercourse.

I find a scrutiny in your letter which occasioned a sudden, and a solemn pause. *How have you passed the winter is your question*? Do you mean to enquire whither usefully or agreeably—can a lady in the capital, encircled by friends, amidst the parade and the pleasures of the gay world expect an affirmative to the last? In this little villa there are neither balls, concerts, or assemblies, there are no card parties, visiting or routs. Yet be assured your friend has no right to wish to be happier in the present state, than she has been the winter past, except conscious deficiency in regard to the first part of the enquiry.

To be more explicit my time has been spent between the necessary cares of my family, the perusal of the labours of the worthy dead, and a literary converse with the virtuous living. When domestic avocations permit the leisure, my pen and my book are my delight and dispose my hours both usefully and agreeably. What a stupid round is this will the gayer part of our sex cry;—I mean those of them who know not the tranquillity of rest, but are ever eager in the pursuit of expedients that may lead them to forget themselves and wear away the intolerable load of time that lies heavy on their hands. Too many think this gift was bestowed for no other purpose than to invent the most ingenious variety in dissipating life away.

I must decline a poetical reply to another question though you have urged it.[3] I am too conscious of my own inability to acquit myself in this way even to my own approbation. As great an admirer as I am of good poetry, I think that which is not executed in a masterly manner is of all composition the least pleasing. Yet sometimes the playful;—at others the solemn muse invites to an attempt in the Parnassian walk.

I thank you for the copies enclosed in yours. I admire the just thoughts, the elegant sentiments, the easy expressions, and lively poetic strains of the amiable Mrs Cxx.[4] But I am not less surprized at the native genius and flowing numbers of the gentle African;[5]—had you given me the pieces without naming the authors, doubtless the first would have claimed the preference. But when we consider Mrs Cxx blessed with the early rudiments of a literary education, cultivated with diligence and matured by the advantages of an acquaintance with the polite and learned world;—how can her productions be equally balanced with those of a barbarian girl, but lately taught either letters or language except the uncouth jargon of the Numidian shores.

These circumstances justly weighed, I think the last must bear away the palm of superior applause as best entitled to the claim of original genius. Yet I regret that Mrs Cxx is about to bid adieu to America, not only as she is your friend, but as a lady possessed of virtue and abilities superior to most of her sex.[6]

I rejoice to hear that your health is in some degree restored; I most ardently wish some other circumstances that imbitter your life may soon wear a brighter hue; yet I sometimes doubt whither we have a right, even to wish that the destinations of providence, should be different from what they are. Here you will reply, surely my friend it is impossible for you to avoid it when your heart is this moment bleeding for a person very dear to you reduced to the most deplorable situation to which human nature is liable.[7] It is indeed hard to submit calmly to see those abilities which once equalled and even surpassed many of the first characters, clouded, shattered, and broken: to see the mind of a man so superior, thus darkened, and that man a most affectionate brother, is grief beyond expression. Yet he who is the author of our rational powers, can easily restore, and will I hope and trust, restore again to usefulness, a man so capable and so willing to promote the happiness of his fellow men. What an humbling consideration to human pride is such an event! Who shall boast of his reasoning

powers when every moment this invaluable blessing is liable to be blotted out? I think none but the most savage heart can forbear to commiserate his misfortune, however varient in political sentiments. I am sure those who have any degree of virtue or benevolence must wish the recovery of this *great man*.

Your prayers I am certain are offered to heaven in unison with those of your affectionate friend
M Warren

MWP1

1. For sources of the scant information on Hesilrige, see Jeffrey H. Richards, *Mercy Otis Warren* (New York: Twayne, 1995), 159n27.

2. Although the date of 1773 in the Letterbook may be correct, it must be late in the year or possibly early 1774. Warren refers to two books in this letter: Phillis Wheatley, *Poems on Various Subjects, Religious and Moral*, and Hester Mulso Chapone, *Letters on the Improvement of the Mind*, both published in London in 1773. Given the slowness of transatlantic communication, it seems likely that copies would not have reached the United States until the latter part of 1773 at the earliest. Hesilrige may have sent handwritten extracts rather than whole books, but even so, the earliest likely date for the letter seems to be late 1773. Further, the repeated inquiry in the second paragraph, "How have you passed the winter . . . ?" suggests early 1774 as the more likely date, at the end of winter or beginning of spring.

3. MOW's refusal to send a poem to her friend seems curious, given her readiness to comply with requests from JA at nearly the same time and the Winthrops in February 1773 (L 8). Her reason, however, may be political. Sarah Hesilrige was married to a baronet, and their loyalties in the mounting crisis were obviously to Britain. MOW often treads lightly around friends or family who are Tories or loyalist sympathizers. Because much of her poetry at this time was political, she seems to have declined in order not to alienate Hesilrige.

4. I.e., Hester Chapone. On the problems with this identity, see Richards, *Mercy Otis Warren*, 42.

5. I.e., Phillis Wheatley, the recently freed slave and poet, who lived in Boston.

6. The standard biographical materials on Chapone, who lived in England, do not refer to a trip to America at this time.

7. MOW refers here to her brother JO2, whose lapses into madness had forced the family to send him to the countryside and away from Boston.

9 TO HANNAH FAYERWETHER TOLMAN WINTHROP

Plymouth January 31st 1774

Not any abatement of affection for my worthy friend has occasioned a silence longer than usual. After a long and painful application to public business the partner both of the cares and the joys of my life appears to be in such declining health as to alarm my fears beyond expression. To you who have often apprehended the dissolution of the tender tie, the dearest union instituted by heaven for the happiness of its creatures, I can speak my concern. After all the kind provision made for passing our days in tranquillity, so trancient is the nature of human felicity that we ought in the happiest moments to observe,

> "Just such a sober sence of joy
> "As Angels well might keep
> "A joy chastised by Piety
> "A joy prepared to weep."[1]

Amidst innumerable blessings the beneficent hand of providence has bestowed, that of health to my family has been continued in an uncommon degree till lately. I have experienced many vicissitudes in life, yet death has never entered my habitation for more than twenty years that I have been a housekeeper till within a few days when I lost a faithful and affectionate servant that has been with me the most of that time.

Unimportant as one in that station appears yet when they have acquitted themselves faithfully and fulfilled the duties of life, the distinctions made between the master and the servant, the prince and the peasant may be in favour of the latter. When these partition walls are broken down and the clogs of sense removed they may probably look down with ineffable contempt on Kings and Emperors as well as on the inferior votaries of ambition who daily prostitute conscience and all the sacred ties of humanity, for the pageantry of a day. The style of this may wear a graver cast than would be pleasing to every lady, but the scene I have lately witnessed naturally called up these reflections, and friendship always allows a reciprocal communication and demands a sympathetic tear under every adverse circumstance; yet I hope my letters will never wear so gloomy a cast as to damp the amiable cheerfulness of my friends. Hers we expect will be

fraught with more brilliant periods, fixed near the seat of science, of politicks, and polite intelligence, daily convening with the gay and the great; while my present retirement furnishes few companions whose hearts are replete with dignified or elegant sentiments, or whose manners exhibit the external graces of delicacy or politeness.

Yet I hope the barrenness of the soil will not prevent your intended tour to this first residence of our heroic and pious ancestors; for you may be assured of as cordial a reception as was ever given either in the ancient days of simplicity and hospitality or in the modern schools of civilization and refinements. Let not my proposed visit retard yours; I shall make no journey till the rough[?] blasts of Boreas[2] subside and grey Winter gives place to the bloom of Spring. Thus the expectation of future pleasure from that delightful converse that adds wings to the flying hours, and brightens the capacity of the mind, is a recent proof that hope is not only the companion of spring but that she aids even the autumn of life with her gentle aspect.

Though the feeble texture of a very delicate frame gives hourly admonitions of mortality, yet I shall look forward to the period when I may expect to meet those friends whom placed at such a distance as to prevent the frequent social intercourse that may lead the mind from temporary enjoyments, and lift it to those objects that yield permanent and unmixed delight.

If we may set our affections on anything below the stars, we shall surely find indulgence for our fond attachments to friends, whose rational and reciprocal affection, we have no reason to think will terminate with time.

I hope my excellent friend Doctor Winthrop has recovered from his late dangerous illness, and that the same power which has restored will long continue him a blessing to the community and the brightest ornament of the society to which he belongs. But the man of science and virtue holds himself in readiness to quit every incumbrance and rise towards the celestial world he has so often explored;—thus when he no longer associates with this lower creation, he will be pursuing with greater advantage the delightful enquiries here but begun. How often has he anticipated the felicity of joining those kindred minds who have been longer employed in the investigation of the astonishing works of the grand architect.

Shall I [??] from ideas so pleasing and agreeable to mention a man vested with power employing it only to destroy the happiness of society? No—let

us leave him to his own reflections and to the just contempt posterity will have for such a character.

The private delinquent may blush when he recollects his errors, and in the grand adjustment will suffer only in proportion to the design and influence[?] of his crimes; but what must be the punishment of him whose public conduct appears to be a series of premeditated injuries, not only against his contemporaries but against communities that may exist when a train of suceeding generations have forgotten to execrate his memory. May a speedy and sincere repentance obtain forgiveness from heaven for crimes too big and too far spread to expect the pardon of their fellow-men.[3]

There seems to be a dawn of hope for the friendly disposition of some illustrious characters in England, that mean will not be pushed to the last extreme notwithstanding the late addition of [??]councellors about the throne. What a contemptible figure in the future annals will [??] the present reign exhibit?

It appears to me the gentlemen of the provincial Congress have a most difficult part to act,—the public expectation is turned towards them, and eagerly insisting some important step;—while affairs abroad as well as at home seem to hang suspended on such [??] that the least eccentric movement to the right or to the left might be attended with the most alarming consequences.[4] May heaven direct their resolutions, and mark their conduct with wisdom and integrity, while it invigorates the manly arm to execute whatever the exigencies of the times may require.

As we have often seen the most serene sky after the storms of the natural world have subsided, we may yet hope for at least a temporary calm in the political hemisphere if a few baleful meteors which at present infect [??] it were again reduced to their original insignificancy.

May those enlarged and noble minds which dare to act with becoming firmness on the most trying occasions be long continued to adorn each department in which they may be called to officiate, and under the benign influence of a superintending providence, may the virtue of the people save the empire from destruction.

We have many among us who yet inherit the noble spirit of their ancestors, who still retain a sense of the invaluable rights purchased at the expense of life and fortune to a race of self denying heroes whose actions would have done honour to the annals of Sparta;—and is it not probable

that others will arise when a system is natured that wears a fair prospect of success? Nor do I believe the *politeness* of one or the *selfishness* of another Colony will prevent their taking part in the conflict. They will never leave the Massachusetts alone to fall a prey to ministerial vengeance—the newly established correspondence between the several provinces, will probably communicate a laudable breathing after the original freedom of our progenitors that will spread far and wide to the confusion and terror of the abettors of despotism.—I trust heaven will point out means for relief—Oh! that it may not be written in the characters of blood!

I sincerely congratulate my friends on the entrance of the new year and whatever mighty resolutions may hang on the wing of time may they know no interruption to their happiness but what is inseparably connected with a state of moral discipline and will finally tend to redouble the felicity which is the result of conscious virtue.

You will remember M^r^ Warrens affectionate regards to Doctor Winthrop and Lady always accompany those of your very sincere friend,
M Warren

MWP1

1. The passage, with slight variations, is from Hannah More, "Sir Eldred of the Bower," in *Poems* (Boston: Wells and Lilly, 1817), part 2, ll. 213–16. MOW, of course, had a British edition of the work before her, but the earliest date we can find for "Sir Eldred" is 1776, two years after the date of this letter. Therefore, it is likely that MOW added this passage when JW2 transcribed her drafts many years later.

2. In Greek mythology, the god of the north wind.

3. Footnote is added here: "Alluding to Hutchinsons political conduct."

4. The Massachusetts Provincial Congress met as a successor to a colonial government that had, in essence, been dissolved by Hutchinson. Both JW and John Winthrop had been elected, but the new governor, Thomas Gage, later disallowed Winthrop from taking his seat.

10 TO HANNAH FAYERWETHER TOLMAN WINTHROP

Plymouth 1774

When I took up my pen I determined to leave the field of politicks to those whose proper business it is to speculate and to act at this important crisis; but the occurrences that have lately taken place are so alarming and the subject so interwoven with the enjoyments of social and domestic life as to command the attention of the mother and the wife who before the contest is decided may be called to weep over the names of her beloved sons, slain by the same sword that deprived of life their intrepid and heroic Father. Who in these modern days, has arrived at such a degree of Roman virtue as not to grudge the costly sacrifice?

I tremble for the event of the present commotions;—there must be a noble struggle to recover the expiring liberties of our injured country; we must re-purchase them at the expence of blood, or tamely acquiesce, and embrace the hand that holds out the chain to us and our children. Much interested in the success of the conflict.—I feel myself unequal to the combat, yet hope the *woman* will never get the better of that disinterested regard to universal happiness which ought to actuate the benevolent mind. Heaven give us strength to sustain the shock, if this country should be compelled to the last appeal—and forbid that anything in your conduct or my own should countenance the opinions of those who explode every generous principle, deny the existence of patriotism and ridicule all pretences to public virtue. How derogatory to the human character are these ideas! Yet we daily see too many instances of a sordid selfish spirit prompting men to act diametrically opposite to the welfare of society, even where there had been heretofore some pretences to integrity.

Whether the Patriots of the present day will be able to effect their laudable designs in our time is very uncertain, yet I trust they will lay the foundation deep and that future generations will not be wanting to themselves, but will maintain and support the priviledges to which they are entitled both by nature and compact.

By the spirit, firmness, and the happy union in similar measures, which animate the extensive colonies, it appears as if the wheel of fortune had taken her circle and was about to lay level with the ground some of her uppermost spokes: as it is well known that the falling joints, have been

long defective and the adjacent props very rotten at heart, they cannot be supposed to have strength and firmness sufficient to support the reversive motion. If there should be total demolition of the decaying fabrick which has been building up for several years, with uncommon industry, the chief architect[1] in our province must retire with a thorn in his bosom, without the poor consolation of a friend hardy enough to justify his wicked attempts.

It appears to me that every step the infatuated Britons have been taking, is but a means of hastning the grandeur and glory of America;—yet still the fears of a fatal interruption of private and social enjoyment often fill my mind with gloomy apprehensions. I believe the grandeur, magnificence and wealth of States seldom promotes, either the virtue or happiness of individuals; where there is the most simplicity of life and manners there is most felicity:—unacquainted with the arts of civilization uncontaminated by luxury, those virtues which spring up in the soil and are most congenial[?] to the nature of man have a chance for improvement.

Yet I am no advocate for savage life: I wish to see America boast in her turn of science and of Empire,—of Empire not established in the thralldom of nation but on a more equitable base on such an exalted plan that while for mutual security, the authority of rulers is acknowledged, they may neither be prompted by avarice or ambition to infringe the natural rights of their fellow men;—nor debase their own species by requiring abject and unworthy submissions, where there is little distinction but what arises from the imperfection of human nature which makes it necessary to submit to some subordination.

Though such an happy state, such an equal government, may be considered by some as an Utopian dream; yet you and I can easily conceive of nations and states rising to the highest consequence under more liberal plans than are pointed out by the marble-hearted despots of ancient or modern times.[2]

But I expatiate no longer on the prospect of public distress nor dwell on the painful sensations of the human heart in this day of general perplexity, when the hero and the patriot are alternately exhilarated or depressed by the varying aspects of the political Hemisphere;—nor shall I make an apology for touching on a subject a little out of line of female attention, as we are both happily united to such companions as think us capable of taking part in whatever affects themselves. As for that part of mankind

who think every rational pursuit lies beyond the reach of a sex too generally devoted to folly, their censure or applause is equally indifferent to your sincere friend
M Warren

MWP1

1. Note is added: "Governor Hutchison." Hutchinson would leave for England at the end of June 1774, to be replaced by Gage. This letter must have been written sometime before his departure.

2. This letter includes an important statement of MOW's republican ideals. By "liberal" she means freedom of individuals from governmental interference.

II TO HANNAH QUINCY LINCOLN

[The recent widow of Dr. Bela Lincoln, Hannah Lincoln had known MOW for many years. Hannah Lincoln's brother-in-law, Benjamin Lincoln, lived in Hingham, Plymouth County, and later served as a general during the Revolutionary War. Her nephew, Benjamin Lincoln Jr., later married MOW's niece, Mary Otis. This letter reflects the complex rhetorical strategies employed by MOW when linking together family, social ties, gender, and politics during the great uncertainties facing New Englanders in 1774.]

Boston, June 12, 1774

I am very sorry Mrs. Lincoln should feel any pain arising from our late agreeable interview;—I own I recollect nothing in the short conversation I had with her, that should occasion it; nor has she any reason to regret the frankness of her disposition, as it exposed her to no censure, even had I been inclined to make an ill use of her confidence. I know not why any gentleman of your acquaintance should caution you not to enter any particular subject when we should meet.[1] I should have a very ill opinion of myself, if any variation of sentiment with regard to political matters, should lessen my esteem for the disinterested, undesigning, and upright heart;—and it would argue great want of candour to think there was not many such (more especially among our own sex) who yet judge very differently with regard to the calamities of our unhappy country, and the

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[The recent widow of Dr. Bela Lincoln, Hannah Lincoln had known MOW for many years. Hannah Lincoln's brother-in-law, Benjamin Lincoln, lived in Hingham, Plymouth County, and later served as a general during the Revolutionary War. Her nephew, Benjamin Lincoln Jr., later married MOW's niece, Mary Otis. This letter reflects the complex rhetorical strategies employed by MOW when linking together family, social ties, gender, and politics during the great uncertainties facing New Englanders in 1774.]

Boston, June 12, 1774

I am very sorry Mrs. Lincoln should feel any pain arising from our late agreeable interview;—I own I recollect nothing in the short conversation I had with her, that should occasion it; nor has she any reason to regret the frankness of her disposition, as it exposed her to no censure, even had I been inclined to make an ill use of her confidence. I know not why any gentleman of your acquaintance should caution you not to enter any particular subject when we should meet.[1] I should have a very ill opinion of myself, if any variation of sentiment with regard to political matters, should lessen my esteem for the disinterested, undesigning, and upright heart;—and it would argue great want of candour to think there was not many such (more especially among our own sex) who yet judge very differently with regard to the calamities of our unhappy country, and the

authors of its misery. But though every mind of the least sensibility, must be greatly affected with the present distress; and even a female pen might be excused for touching on the important subject; yet I will not undertake to give a full answer to the queries proposed by my friend; for as the wisest among the other sex are much divided in opinion, it might justly be deemed impertinent, or rather sanguine for me to decide. I can only wish that those measures may be adopted, that will tend most to the welfare of the community, and to the universal happiness of mankind, and however persons may differ with regard to the particular mode of action to promote that end, I think it clear that the cultivation of internal harmony, and a steady resolution among ourselves to practice the great duties of self denial and charity, will be more likely to repel the shafts of the oppressor, than the drawing forth the weapons of violence.

Greatly must every generous and manly mind [??] at the thought of setting down quietly, under the yoke of bondage; yet one would think that all parties must agree to deprecate the calamities that must arise, if this people are at last pushed to extremities, and to unite in praying that the civil sword, may never be brandished over our heads. You ask why did we urge on this sudden display of ministerial power? In return let me ask by whose avarice and ambition the people were precipitated to take some rash and unjustifiable steps? Mankind are generally inclined to submission to rulers, and I believe history will furnish few instances of universal murmur, except when power is made, by the corrupt passions of governors, the instrument of tyranny. You need not apologize for favouring me with a line; I should have returned an answer by your messenger according to your request had I been in town, but I did not return from Cambridge till Saturday last. Be assured it will always give me pleasure to hear from Mrs Lincoln and believe her to be unfeignedly your friend, who to whatever she writes chooses to subscribe at large the name of
M Warren

MWP1

1. It is not entirely clear what this conversation entailed, except that it involved rival political views. Hannah Lincoln's brother, Josiah Quincy, later in the year undertook a secret mission to Britain to find a resolution to the colonial conflict, and MOW's knowledge of this mission later occasioned further apology on her part for having revealed the

information to a third party. At this point, however, it appears that MOW's political radicalism has prompted a friend of Hannah Lincoln's to caution her about being swayed by MOW's point of view.

12 TO HANNAH FAYERWETHER TOLMAN WINTHROP

[On June 30, 1774, the Boston Port Act took effect, closing Boston harbor to commercial shipping and imposing martial law on the city, the "thraldom" referred to in the following letter. For MOW, more quickly than for many others, this parliamentary act marked a point of no return, as she indicates to Winthrop.]

Plymouth August 1774

I returned yesterday from a visit to my venerated father: on my arrival at my own habitation I met the tidings that the Royal signet has been affixed to those acts that are designed to perpetuate the thraldom of America—more especially the Massachusetts. I think the appointment of the new Council will nearly wind up the state farce that has for several years been playing off.[1] I beleive this is the last comic scene of the peice that will be exhibited. It is probable administration will hasten the tragic part of the Drama: and that the distresses of a brave and generous people;—pushed almost to desperation, are irremediable.

The man who accepts a place, which he could not fill till the constitution of his country was annihilated, deserves himself to groan under the yoke of servitude. It is to be hoped such will meet that contempt from every one which the time serving sycophant so justly deserves.

What a burlesque on good government: men of ability and probity negatived and displaced, to make room for the greyheaded tools or the younger votaries to the views of the minister, many of them without education;—and some who are devoid of talents requisite for any department beyond the shop or the counting house.[2]

Yet I cannot but think our commander in chief[3] has discovered his sagacity in his list of councellors. Had he ransacked the regions of venality and adulation from the falls of *Niagara* to the streams of Neponset,[4] he could not have found a group of men more fit or subservient to the views

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Yet I cannot but think our commander in chief[3] has discovered his sagacity in his list of councellors. Had he ransacked the regions of venality and adulation from the falls of *Niagara* to the streams of Neponset,[4] he could not have found a group of men more fit or subservient to the views

of administration or who are less tenderly touched with a generous regard to the freedom of their country than those who have recently sworn to abet the ruin of the constitution, than[?] to become the assassins of liberty to their native country.

Will not the infamy of a North[5] and a Hutchinson be written in characters of blood, while the crimsoned stream will mark to future ages, the glory, and the virtue, of a patriotic race, who (if necessary) will cheerfully sacrifice life and its enjoyment, to extricate posterity from the threatened bondage.

Must not the feelings of a humanity be totally eradicated from the bosoms of men, who for the temporary advantage of a dignified title or the imaginary happiness of accumulated wealth have sown the seeds of discord and will not cease to nourish the baneful growth, till the foundations of a mighty Empire are shaken, till the civil sword is drawn, and thousands of their fellow citizens may fall in a contest enkindled to gratify the selfish passions of some of the most worthless, and wicked instruments of power that America can produce?

My friend will not wonder if she discovers some warm emotions when she considers how nearly I am touched with the subject of my pen;—no one has at stake a larger share of domestic happiness than myself, and while I feel greatly concerned for the welfare of my country, my soul is not so far Romanized, but that the apprehensions of the wife and the mother are continually awake. The busy imagination will sometimes present the Sire bowing beneath the mighty conflict, and his weeping Sons, buckling on the helmet and grasping the naked steel, to avenge by their youthful arms, the wounds given to nature and[?] to freedom or to sacrifice at the shrine of liberty a life rendered of little value by the depredations of tyranny. I then check the painful reverie and look forward with lively hope to the meeting of the delegates of the American States;—may they be endowed with virtue and judgment wisely to deliberate and resolve, and fortitude and vigour, to execute whatever may be thought necessary to reestablish the virtue and tranquillity of a much injured people! But we must leave to time and to the great arbiter of the universe the decision of events which may produce mighty consequences both in the European and in the western World.

With my respectful compliments to Doctor Winthrop tell him I am much obliged to him for his candour, but should think the obligation redoubled

if he would kindly censure whenever he thinks your friend deserves it, either by too bold an attempt or by her too free communication.
M Warren

MWP1

1. MOW refers to the so-called Intolerable Acts passed by Parliament to impose a variety of conditions on the colonies and rejected by American Whigs as violating their rights as British citizens. One of the acts abrogated the current legislative system in Massachusetts and led to the creation of a mandamus council in place of the old governor's council, which was previously elected by the lower house members. The new council was now appointed by the crown and not subject to local control. This act led to the writing of MOW's play *The Group* (1775).

2. One of the people "negatived," or denied a seat in the Massachusetts government, was John Winthrop. Although probably himself "greyheaded," Winthrop, by his opposition to the Hutchinsonians, distinguished himself in MOW's eyes from the mandamus councilors who were sextagenarians but who followed the loyalist model of acquiescence to British policy in the colonies.

3. The new military governor, Thomas Gage.

4. River in eastern Massachusetts that flows along the southern edge of Boston.

5. Frederick, Lord North, the British prime minister from 1770 to 1782.

13 TO HANNAH QUINCY LINCOLN

Plymouth, September 3, 1774

As Mrs. Lincoln's last agreeable letter did not come to hand till sometime after it was *wrote*, that detention must serve as an apology for her not receiving a more immediate reply. But why did you damp my pleasure in the perusal by a threat that it is the last of the kind I should enjoy;—be assured that the unexpected movement from you to open a correspondence, is to me a pleasing proof that the early attachments of youth are not obliterated from your bosom, but that the sentiments of friendship, you then discovered are matured by time, and strengthened, rather than diminished by absence. I hold myself much obliged by your expressions of esteem, and thank the unknown gentleman, referred to in both yours, for the favourable opinion he has formed of your friend; I wish there was more real merit to found it on;—however it shall be her study that no part of her

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conduct shall occasion a reverse of judgment; I sincerely forgive his advice to you, with regard to our short interview, whatever was his motive for the precaution, but on condition he pardons my touching on a subject so much out of the road of female attention, as the contents of this must be, if I comply with your repeated request, and give my sentiments concerning the present unhappy situation of my country. But as every domestic enjoyment depends on the decision of the mighty contest, who can be an unconcerned silent spectator?—not surely the fond mother or the affectionate wife, who trembles least[1] her dearest connections should fall the victims of lawless power, or at least pour out the warm blood as a libation at the shrine of liberty, e'er she unmolested may again erect her cheerful standard on the American shores; and painful as is this last idea, it is not less irksome than to embrace the odious alternative, and acquiesce that the chains of thraldom should be forever fixed on the descendants of a race of worthies, who, to secure to them the rights of nature, rivaled the much admired heroes of antiquity in the exercise of the illustrious virtues of fortitude, patience, and self denial?

It is with reluctance I must differ in opinion from some whom I esteem;—but my friend must excuse me if I cannot agree with her that the people of this province have been remarkably refractory in their opposition to the late manoeuvres of administration;—nor can I concede that we must be transmitted to posterity as deficient either in loyalty to our sovereign, or a due submission to rulers;—but think the faithful historian must bear testimony to the patience and forbearance of this generation, who have been betrayed by those, who were bound by all the ties of humanity and gratitude to protect them;—and insulted by a hostile parade in the streets of their cities;—new impositions and additional oppressions have been the answer to each remonstrance, and dragooning, and blockading, the only arguments on the side of power, to heal the breach and cement a union between Britain and the colonies. What has been the provocation for such repeated injuries? Only a noble resolution, to preserve inviolate those priviledges we have a right to possess both by the law of nature, and the sacred sanction of compacts; it is true indeed in the course of the arduous struggle, there have been some irregularities that are not to be justified;—some outbreakings of indignation that would not stand the test, if examined at the bar of equity;—yet perhaps fewer than ever took place in any country under similar circumstances; witness the commotions in Berne on

the downfall of the commonwealth, and the convulsions in Britain in the days of the Stuarts.

But this ought by no means to stigmatize the efforts of patriotism;—but every one should consider how difficult it is to restrain the provoked multitude when aroused by a sense of wrong, from that supineness to which mankind are so generally prone: they know not in the first overflowings of resentment how to ward off the threatened ills, or to repel the arm of despotism, which has manacles prepared to enslave the unborn millions. It is a work of time to form a regular system of opposition to successful tyranny, and if before it can be quite adjusted, a people should be reduced almost to a state of anarchy, I must again dissent from my friend, and think this situation on the whole is productive of less evil, than an abject submission to corrupt and venal governors, who if not timely checked, would banish every ray of learning, liberty, and virtue, and plunge mankind in ignorance, and its hateful concomitant servility and vice. Especially if we consider how much easier it is to restore peace and order to societies and bring people back to a regular subordination, than to break the yoke of servitude, when a neck has been long accustomed to wear it. But as you seem inclined to censure the spirit of independence that prevails and think it indicates a disposition to deny all authority both divine and human, I cannot quit the subject without wishing you would a few moments contemplate the nature of man; consider them as originally on an equal footing, subject to the same feelings, stimulated by the same passions, endowed with the same heavenly spark to point them to what conduces most to the tranquillity of society, and to the happiness of the individual, and then say, is it not astonishing, that by far the greater part of the species, in all ages of the world, should become the willing dupes of a few, who claim an indefeasible right to seize on the property and destroy the liberty and lives of their fellow men? It is true the ferocity of the human mind is such, that the great law of self preservation has made it necessary to select some by mutual consent, to rule over others, but when that power is abused by a cruel and arbitrary sway, the same law authorizes a resistance, and as this asylum of our fathers is yet perhaps the freest spot on the globe, who can forbear applauding those characters among us who still assent the dignity of human nature, by a manly opposition to the strides of wanton power, which have of late threatened to sink the inhabitants of this land, to a level with the African slave or the more pusillanimous and effeminate Asiatic? But

though I allow there is great reason to regret the want of a higher regard to the land of the supreme governor of the Universe, yet I imagine there is as strong a sense of piety, and as strict an adherence to the rules of morality among the people of New England, as in an equal number of men in any part of Christendom; but I greatly fear the spirit of animosity and discord that now reigns will root out the social virtues, and plant revenge, and all of its baneful attendants in their room. But I will not anticipate the painful prospect, but will hope that kind heaven will interfere and save this people from the dread calamities attendant on civil dissentions;—but if finally the sword must be drawn, may the American Brutii and Casii—her rising Hampdens, Sydneys, & Pymms,[2] feel that divine *afflatus* which paramount to every thing human, causes the animated hero to consider the Lord of Hosts as his leader, and under his conquering banners may they obtain a glorious victory, and see freedom and harmony re-established throughout the British Empire, and the liberties of the Western world fixed on so firm a basis, that it will not hereafter be in the power of ambition and tyranny, to shake the durable fabric.

After asking pardon for detaining you thus long, and re-assuring you I should not have attempted to have given my thoughts on any thing of a political nature, but in compliance with the repeated injunctions of a friend of whose candour I have not the least doubt, I shall only add, that if your brother[3] is not embarked on his intended voyage before this reaches you, you will with my compliments, tell him my best wishes attend him, may he return in safety, and be a happy instrument in the hand of providence of promoting the interest and felicity of his native country,
M Warren

MWP1

1. I.e., lest.

2. Brutii and Casii: Brutuses and Cassiuses, republican revolutionaries in the mold of their Roman counterparts. Hampden: John Hampden (1594–1643), cousin to Oliver Cromwell, opponent to Charles I, and officer in the parliamentary army. Sydney: Algernon Sidney (1622–83), Whig republican theorist, author of *Discourses Concerning Civil Government*, who was executed by Charles II. Pymm: John Pym (1584–1643), leader of opposition to Charles I and organizer of parliamentary control over the army.

3. The note here reads, "Josiah Quincy Junr." Quincy departed America for Britain on September 28, 1774, but died in April 1775 on his return voyage from his meetings with friends and opponents of the colonial resistance.

14 TO CATHARINE SAWBRIDGE MACAULAY

Plimouth N.E. December 29 1774

Your kind Notice of my last Emboldens me again to Interrupt your more important pursuits by offering my Warmest acknowledgments for the Expressions of personal Regard contained in your agreable Favour of Sept. 11th as well as for your Generous Attention to the publick Calamities of my Country.

Though I never imagined that while you were Researching the Records of time & by your Elegant pen Exhibiting to the World the most striking traits of former Tyrants, you was inattentive to the living Agents of a Corrupt Court: who have been long forming a system of Despotism that should Reach beyond the Atlantic & involve this Extensive Continent in the same Thralldom that Awaits the Miserable Asiatic.

But how Absurd will the plans of modern policy appear when the faithful Historian shall transmit to posterity the late Manoeuvres of a British Administration: when they shall Behold them plunging the Nation still deeper in an immense debte, Equiping her Fleets to Harrass the Coasts, & her armies to insult & subjugate these loyal & populous Colonies, who (from the first settlement of this once dreary Wilderness to the mad project of shuting up the port of Boston,) have been Voluntarily pouring their treasures into the Lap of Britain. Will not succeeding generations be Astonished when told that this Maritime City was Blokaded at a period when her Commercial interests were closely interwoven with those of Britain, when the Tracts of Cultivated Lands on this Continent, acknowledging the sceptre of Brunswick were almost immeasurable, & when at the same time they boasted their united Millions Ready to pour out the Warm Blood as a Libation at the shrine of Freedom ere they would submit to become the slaves of Arbitrary power?

But tho America stands Armed with Resolution and Virtue, she still Recoils at the thought of Drawing the sword against the state from whence

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But tho America stands Armed with Resolution and Virtue, she still Recoils at the thought of Drawing the sword against the state from whence

she derived her Origen, tho that state like an unnatural parent has plung'd her dagger into the Bosom of her affectionate offspring.

But may I not hope to hear from you Madam, who can easily Delineate their Characters that the New parliment principly Consists of men of more conciliating tempers, of men who inherit the glorious spirit which distinguished their Noble Ancestors: & stimulated them to stand forth as the Barriers of English Liberty in the most perilous seasons: yet such is the prevailing Luxury & Dissipation of the times, such the undue influence of the Crown from the tribes of placemen, Pensioners, & Dependants (Backed with a large standing army, that Nursery of slavery & Vice, that Bane of Every free state) that I fear there is little Reason to Expect it.

But if the Majority of the Commons still continue the Dupes of Venality and Corruption, they will soon see the Genius which once Animated their Hambdens, Haringtons,[1] & Pyms, has taken up her Residence on these Distant shores.

The seeds of Empire are sown in this new World, the Ball Rolls Westward fast, and though daily threatned with the incursion of savages: & the Depredations of foreign auxilliries, yet each City from Nova Scotia to Georgia has her Decii & her Fabii:[2] Ready to Sacrifice their Devoted Lives to preserve inviolate & to convey to their Children the inherent Rights of Men, confered on all by the God of Nature, and the priviledges of English men claimed by Americans from the sacred sanctions of Compacts.

It is not possible for me Madam to give you an Adequate Idea of the situation of this Country, 'tho doubtless it will be done by some more able pen.

The Boston port Bill ocasions such A stagnation of commerce as is felt in Every Villa of the Massachusets. The Bill for altering the Constitution has Reduced the province to a state of Nature. The Legislative Body is prevented meeting, the Executive officers Rendered incapable of acting, & the Courts of justice shut up. Nothing but the Virtue of this people prevents our Daily feeling the Dreadful Consequences of Anarchy in the Exstream.

Heaven only knows how long we can continue in this state. But such is the Ferocity of Human Nature that it is not to be expected society can subsist long without some Government which may finally drive us to assume such a form as is most consistent with the taste & genius of a free people.

Ere this Reaches your Hand you will doubtless have seen the Resolves of the provincial & the result of the Continental Congress. Perhaps there

never was any Human Law to which Mankind so Religiously & so generally Adhered as the Americans do to the Resolutions of those Assemblys.

And now a firm, undaunted, persevering people, (with the sword half Drawn from the scabard) are patiently waiting the Effects of those measures. The Vigorous spirit that universally Reigns, the Determined oppotition[3] to the strides of Wanton power, & the unshaken union of the American Colonies is so Remarkable that I think we must Ascribe it to the Divine Agency of a superintending providence. But what are the grand designs of the Almighty Governour of the universe, or what the important Events, the present Comotions will produce time only can disclose, but if pacific Measures do not soon take place, none can wonder that a timid Woman should tremble for the consequences, more especially one who is connected by the tenderest tie to a Gentleman whose principles & conduct in this province may Expose him to fall an Early Victim, either in the day of Battle, or by the Vindictive Hand of Lawless power.

Will you pardon me Madam if I own that my Apprehensions are sometimes Awake least Britain should be infatuated enough to push the unhappy Americans to the last appeal. I behold the civil sword Brandish'd over our Heads & an innocent Land Drenched in Blood. I see the inhabitants of our plundered cities quitting the Elegancies of life, possesing nothing but their Freedom, taking refuge in the Forests. I Behold Faction & Discord tearing up an Island we once held dear as our own inheritance, and A Mighty Empire (long the dread of distant Nations) tottering to the very Foundation. Forgive dear Madam & I draw a Veil over the painful Revire.[4]

It gives me particular pleasure to hear that your Worthy Brother is reelected a Member of parliment. Mr Sawbridge[5] has been often Mentioned with Respect & Gratitude at the social Boards of the American patriots, & when assured by his good sister that he will still continue an Advocate to the injured, we thank her for the communication, And ardently wish that his Laudable Example might fire the Breasts of a certain August Assembly to do that justice, which not only the Colonies Wish but Every Honest Man in Europe must Expect.

I am Exstreamly obliged by your kind Remembrance of an unhappy man[6] once the pride of his numerous friends & a principle supporter of the invaded Rights of his Country. But Heaven who bestows superior intelects has a right to limit the Duration, and so inscrutable are the ways of providence that the Vilest instruments are often permited to work the Ruin of

the individual to undermine the Happiness of the State. The truth of the first I feel in an instance too painful to mention, & the tears of all America Witness the Last: traduced & misrepresented as she has been by men that were Bound by all the ties of Honour, Gratitude, and Humanity to Defend her.

Were not the peculiar Circumstances of the times some Apology, yet from your Candor Madam I should Expect a pardon for the length of this Letter, & as a proof therof may I hope for the indulgence of a few more of your Excellent Sentiments & judicious observations in the next I am favoured with from you, but whatever Cause may prevent or postpone me that pleasure, may your want of Health be the Last. Heaven grant you the confirmation & long continuance of of [*sic*] that invaluable Blessing with the Addition of every other Felicity that life can Boast.

And if the lowering Cloud which now darkens the American Hemisphere should pass over & a more Bright and Tranquil prospect appear, May you be able to gladen with A visit your Admiring Friends in this quarter of the Globe.

Among which there is no one who [can] subscribe With More Respect & Affection than your
very Humble servant,
Mercy Warren

Macaulay Papers, Gilder Lehrman Collection, New-York Historical Society RC[7]

1. To her previous list of English republican theorists and political figures (L 13, note 1), she adds James Harrington (1611–77), author of *The Commonwealth of Oceana* (London: D. Pakeman, 1656).

2. Publius Decius Mus and Quintus Fabius Maximus Rullianus were Roman consuls for the year 297 BCE (among other times) and heroes of the Battle of Sentium in 295. Thus Decii and Fabii are those who, like them, are willing to sacrifice private comfort for public service.

3. I.e., opposition. MOW often uses *ti* where we now use *si*.

4. I.e., reverie.

5. Macaulay's brother, John Sawbridge (1732–95), a Whig MP from London and lord mayor, regularly opposed the North administration's policy on America.

6. J02.

7. Another version can be found in the Letterbook.

15 TO ABIGAIL SMITH ADAMS

[The Warren and the Adams families had fast developed into close friends in the early stages of anti-administration activity. By late 1774, epistolary contact between MOW and John and Abigail Adams was frequent, with occasional meetings in person. Although the Adamses were a decade younger than the Warrens, they seemed to share the same basic republican values. Both families were elites, were motivated by the example of JO2, and strongly opposed the current royal government in Massachusetts. Whereas MOW's letters to John are largely political and literary, those to Abigail often include more domestic affairs but are hardly limited to home concerns.]

Plymouth December 29th 1774

I sincerely congratulate my friend on the restoration of the invaluable blessing of health without which if I may so express it, life is but a painful blank;—may it be long, very long, before she again knows an interruption.

But by the stile and spirit of yours of December fifth, I should judge you was quite as much affected by the shocks of the political as of the natural constitution—though I hope we have not so much to fear as you then apprehended.

I do not pretend to judge whether you have sufficient grounds for your apprehension that the present commotions will not soon subside;—but as our weak and timid sex, is generally but the echo of the other and like some pliant piece of clock-work the springs of our souls, move slow or more rapid, just as hope, fear, or fortitude give motion to the conducting wires, that govern all our actions, I acknowledge I build much on the high key which seems to animate the American Patriots, and particularly on the excellent spirits in which your esteemed friend Mr Warren has lately wrote.—The storm has lowered dark upon us, but I really think the prospect rather brightens, & that there is reason to hope the united efforts of the extensive action will extricate from the hand of the oppressor;—that peace and freedom will be restored at a less costly price than the blood of our Citizens, and that we may yet see public liberty revive, and the beautiful fabric of government repaired and re-established on so firm a base that

it will not be in the power of the venal or the vindictive on either side the Atlantic again to break over its barriers and threaten its dissolution.

I shall return a small folio belonging to M^r^ Adams the first safe and convenient opportunity;—tell him I almost regret the curiosity that led me to wish, to look over the pages, in which human nature is portrayed in so detestable a light, as the characters of the Borgian family exhibit.[1] But this fatal inheritance of our first mother often subjects us to painful inconveniences, and we sometimes grow wiser at the expence of candour, and that universal esteem of mankind so natural and so becoming in the early part of life. For, bad as the world appears, after the scores begin to roll over our heads, I cannot but suspect the heart of that youth, who steps forward on the stage of action with an ill opinion of his fellow-men;—a certain degree of caution is necessary, yet we must commiserate the wretch, who by his suspicion of all around him deprives himself of the best cordial of life, the social delights of friendship:—for he who has no confidence in any one, I believe has little sincerity of his own.

As I am called upon both by M^r^ and M^rs^ Adams to give my opinion, of a celebrated comic writer, silence in me would be inexcusable, the solemn strains of the tragic muse have been generally more to my taste than the lighter representations of the drama. Yet I think the follies and absurdities of human nature exposed to ridicule in the masterly manner it is done by Moliere[2] may often have a greater tendency to reform mankind than some graver lessons of morality. The observation, that he ridicules vice, without engaging us to virtue, discovers the veneration of my friends for the latter; but when vice is held up at once in an odious and ridiculous light, and the windings of the human heart which lead to self deception unfolded, it certainly points us to the path of reason, and rectitude, and if we do not embrace the amiable image of virtue, we must yet exculpate the monitor, and attribute the misguided choice, to the wrong bias of our own clamorous and ungoverned passions.

M^rs^ A— will excuse my freedom and openness when I tell her I yet see no reason to call in question the genius of a Moliere or the judgement of the person by whose recommendation I read him, but if when I have gone further, I alter my opinion, I shall readily acknowledge it, and wherein I err I stand ready now and at all times to submit to the corrections of my candid friends.

Tell Mr Adams if there was any body in this part of the world that could in compliance with his request sing the rival Nymphs and celebrate the happy victory of a Salacia in a manner that would merit his approbation he may be assured it would immediately be attempted;—but I think a person who with two or three strokes of his pen has sketched out so fine a poetical plan need apply only to his own genius for the completion;[3]—Yet if he thinks it would be too great condescension in him to associate much with the muses, while under the direction of Apollo his time is so much more usefully and importantly filled up, a particular friend of his would be glad of a little clearer explanation of some of his characters; she not being well enough versed in ancient mythology to know who is meant by the son of Neptune who so easily transforms himself into the mischevious of every species, as there are several modern Proteus's to whom it is equally applicable. With compliments to him subscribe the assured friend of Mr and Mrs Adams—
M Warren

MWP1

1. MOW refers to the Borgias, the brilliant, powerful, and ruthless noble family of the Italian Renaissance.

2. Molière is the pen name of the French comic playwright Jean-Baptiste Poquelin (1622–73).

3. At JA's suggestion, MOW wrote a poem on the Boston Tea Party entitled "The Squabble of the Sea Nymphs," which was later included in her *Poems, Dramatic and Miscellaneous* (Boston: I. Thomas and E. T. Andrews, 1790). Salacia is the Roman sea goddess who, after hiding from Neptune, eventually marries him. The Greek original for Salacia is Amphitrite.

16 TO JOHN ADAMS

[Having embarked on a career as a satirist with the publication of her first political play, *The Adulateur*, in 1772, MOW concluded it with her third and last such play, *The Group*, which appeared in early 1775. All three of her political dramas (the other was *The Defeat* [1773]) took aim at Thomas Hutchinson, who appeared as

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the villain Rapatio, or, as in *The Group*, at his remaining cronies who were named to the mandamus council that functioned as the remnant of government still supported by the crown. The following letter continues the satire theme from the previous one to AA and shows MOW's diffidence regarding the relationship between gender and satire, although one suspects she did not really need JA's approval to speak so publicly about politics.]

Plymouth January 30th 1775

Sir,

The very polite introduction to yours of January third, I consider as complimentory far beyond any merit I presume to claim. Those expressions of esteem are frequently words of course, with little design, but to convey an idea of the polished stile of the writer: but in you sir I view them as resulting from the partial bias which ever leads us to look through the most favourable medium on what ever regards those, we wish to consider in the light of friendship.

Notwithstanding the *diffidence* Mr Adams professes to feel, when he takes up the pen to favour me with a line, I hope he will venture on the *arduous attempt*, and be enabled to "*grasp the quill hard enough*" to compleat his design.

Be assured Sir, I am both obliged and gratified at all times, by your letters; but to this I must require an immediate reply, as I am about to submit a casuistical query to your decision. In your judgment I place much confidence as I think your determinations are guided both by ability and rectitude.

Sarcastic reproaches, and personal reflections have been generally disapproved by the wise and the worthy, both in their conversation and their writings. A man may be greatly criminal towards the society in which he lives; but how far, Sir, do you think it justifiable for any individual to hold him up as the object of public derision? Is it consistent with the benevolent spirit of christianity to vilify the delinquent, when we only wish to ward off the fatal consequences of his crimes?

Though from the critical circumstances of our unhappy times, a little personal acrimony might be allowable in your sex,—will not the female character suffer, if she indulges her pen to paint in the darkest shades, even those whom vice and venality have rendered contemptible? Will she not be

suspected as deficient in the most amiable part thereof,—that candour and charity which insurest both affection and esteem?

Your undisguised sentiments on this point will oblige one who is sometimes doubtful, whither the solicitation of a beloved friend (whose whole soul is engaged in the cause of his injured country,) may not lead her, to indulge a satirical propensity, that might to be reined in with the utmost care and attention.

But such are the multiplied wrongs the community daily recieves from a set of unfeeling, unprincipled hirelings:—such the discord sown among us from their wicked machinations,—and such the animosity of parties,—that I am sometimes ready to think we may all with reason apply to ourselves the sentiment a noble author has put into the mouth of the celebrated Pope, on meeting the admired Boileau in the Elyssian fields,—"that neither their censure or their praise had been always free from partiality—and that they had often drawn their pens against such with whom it was more shameful to contend than honourable to vanquish."[1]

I know not what may be your opinion, Sir, of a late composition[2] but as it was so readily ushered into light, and by a gentleman of your discernment presented to the public eye, you cannot wonder, if I presume you thought it might in some degree be beneficial to society. If it is, the authoress must be highly gratified. She will ever be better pleased with picking some useful flower from the seat of Parnassus, than if she was to asscend to its utmost height, and gather the garland and the laurel from its summit, when the glowing beauties might have no tendency to correct the manners of others, or to improve the virtue of her own heart. Your criticism or countenance; your censure or approbation may in some particulars influence her future conduct. It may learn her to be more cautious, or more adventurous, with rega[r]d at least to political publications.

In your last to M[r] Warren, you seem to be quite weary of a state of suspence.—It is painful—it is vexatious. How many years have the hopes of the contending parties been alternately rising and sinking with the weight of a feather, without much prospect of a period to their embarrassments? How much longer, Sir, do you think the political scale will hang in equilibrio? Will not justice and freedom soon preponderate, till the partisans of a corruption and venality, though backed with the weight of ministerial power shall be made to kick the beam?

You cannot wonder that the timidity, and tenderness of a *woman*, should lead her to wish for a speedy termination of those contests, which interrupt almost every social enjoyment of life, and threaten to spread ruin and devastation over the fairest possessions. You Sir will excuse my thus long calling your attention from the most important preperations.

I will only add my fervent wishes that you and the other gentleman appointed to meet in the ensuing Congress[3] may be endowed with wisdom and resolution equal to the difficulties of the day!

If you attempt to repair the shattered Constitution, or to erect a new form of government, may it be constricted with such symmetry of features—such strength of sinews, and vigour of nerves;—that it may not be in the power of either ambition or tyranny to shake the durable fabrick!

But, while the worthy guardians of our liberty and happiness are taking all possible steps for the public welfare, I think they should not be regardless of personal safety. This makes me anxious that the provincial Congress should be at a further distance than *Cambridge* from the headquarters of their vindictive enemies.[4]

I am Sir with great esteem your real friend
M Warren

MWP1

1. MOW may be referring to dialogue 14 in George, Lord Lyttleton, *Dialogues of the Dead* (London: W. Sandby, 1760), which features an imagined colloquy between the English satiric poet Alexander Pope and the French satirist Nicolas Boileau Desprèaux as they meet after death. In that work, the character Pope remarks to Boileau, "We both followed Horace, but in our manner of imitation, and in the turn of our natural genius, there was, I believe, much resemblance. We both were too irritable and too easily hurt by offences, even from the lowest of men. The keen edge of our wit was frequently turned against those whom it was more a shame to contend with than an honour to vanquish."

2. Note in Letterbook draft reads, "A dramatic work entitled, the Group."

3. Note in Letterbook draft reads, "The second Congress departed[?] to meet in Philadelphia, May 1776." This refers to the Second Continental Congress; JA was a member of both continental congresses.

4. JW was a member of the Massachusetts Provincial Congress, which was then meeting in Cambridge but later met in Watertown, among other places, until the British military departed in March 1776.

17 TO SARAH BROWN BOWEN

[During the early years of the Revolution, the Warrens were friendly with Jabez and Sarah Brown Bowen, each from prominent merchant families in Rhode Island, hers being the one to give Brown University its name. Sarah (1742–1800) and MOW appear to have exchanged a few letters; MOW also corresponded with Jabez (1739–1815), who served as lieutenant governor of Rhode Island in 1778–79 and 1781–86. After the war, the Bowens turned Federalist while the Warrens became Antifederalists.]

Plymouth April 1775[1]

My dear Madam

I know from the goodness of your heart you must be very solicitous to hear from me who so lately left you full of the most painful apprehensions for her friends, her family, and her country: I can only inform you that I am still in a state of suspence,—still uncertain whether I shall continue in my own pleasant habitation or whether in a few days, I shall not be obliged to seek a retreat in the wilderness from the remorseless sword of a foe, devoid of that generosity which ought to mark the human mind;—and lost to that honour and compassionate dignity which has long been the boast of Britons. Indeed the unparalleled barbarity in the late action at Lexington[2] evinces that they had forgotten the laws and usages of civilized nations. We have reason to believe that no reports of their cruelty have been exaggerated:—their brutal fury has certainly led them to perpetrate the most savage acts.

I saw yesterday a gentleman who conversed with the brother of a woman cut in peices in her bed with her new born infant by her side. Are these the deeds of rationals?—have we not cause for the most humiliating reflections, when we consider ourselves of the same species with a race of creatures who have thus forgot their origen: who have so far debased the powers of the human soul as to blot out the sense of moral obligation, and by their injustice and infernal ferocity, have rendered themselves fit associates for the most depraved beings?

I shall not detail the transactions of the nineteenth instant, you will have them from every quarter.

I have been concerned for the safety of Colonel Bowen[3] ever since I heard he had ventured into the den of the Lion, in order to rescue an injured friend;—we too often see the most beneficent purposes are not crowned with success,—the reward of virtue is frequently held in the golden scale of justice till the measure is compleat, e'er the prize is let down to the hand of her faithful votaries.

I should have a very ill opinion of myself if I did not feel, the most ardent wishes for the safety of the first friend of your heart; may he be guarded from every outrage and soon return to his family. I feel myself under particular obligation for the polite and friendly reception I found in his hospitable house. I venerate every lover of his country. I doubly esteem them when the patriotic character is enstamped with the strong marks of private worth united with the social and benevolent affections.

Lowering as the political hemisphere at present appears;—I hope some calmer season will soon arrive which will put it in my power to return some part of the civility which I think your due: whether this may be in the city, the village, or the *hermitage*, it is not possible yet to conjecture:—if the latter should be my future destination, I shall still think we were made for society. I believe I shall never feel so much of the disposition of the [??] as to wish to seclude myself from the conversation of the wise and the virtuous part of mankind.

The works of nature and providence proclaim that the great author of the intellectual system designed his creation[?] man, should cultivate the duties of friendship and hospitality as well as self denial and mortification. Let the rigid and morose indulge their unsocial opinions, but let them not damp the cheerfulness of my friend:—though this temper may be discovered in some nearly connected with you. In a world where our knowledge is so circumscribed and our ideas so imperfect, we ought to take all opportunities of improving and enlarging them by the aid of converse.

You will present my friendly salutations to those *bigoted friends* to whom you introduced us, their hearts I dare say are much better than their aspect.

If M[r] Warren was at home he would write with me in the most affectionate regards to Colonel Bowen and Lady, but he is obliged to be almost continually absent on the great calls of his country, for the exertions of the best abilities of all its friends.

I hope my dear madam to hear from you soon, I sincerely wish you a long day of tranquility and peace: and wherever I am, to hear of your welfare will always give pleasure to your unfeignedly—
M Warren

MWP1

1. Given the reference below to the Battle of Lexington, the letter must have been written several days after April 19.

2. The battles of Lexington and Concord on April 19, 1775, were the first major battles of the Revolution.

3. Sarah's husband, Jabez Bowen, was at the time a colonel in the First Regiment of Providence County (Rhode Island); he would later be elected lieutenant governor of the state.

18 TO HARRIET SHIRLEY TEMPLE

[Among MOW's Tory (or suspected Tory) correspondents was Harriet Shirley Temple (1724–1802), daughter of the colonial Massachusetts governor William Shirley and wife of Robert Temple (d. 1784). At the time of this letter, Robert was suspected of being a Tory and was therefore leaving Massachusetts for England; with the help of JA, he would later be allowed to return and eventually collect damages for the felling of trees on his estate by the Continental Army. The Temples, including their three daughters, relocated to Ireland in 1780.[1]]

Plymouth June 2^{d} 1775

My dear M^{rs} Temple

I have lately felt so much for the painful anxiety and distress into which you and your agreeable family have been thrown by a concurance of unfortunate circumstances, that my sympathetic heart will not suffer me to be silent. If the voice of a real friend could afford any relief to your agitated mind, how readily should I endeavour to restore that tranquillity to your breast which sooner or later will be the portion of the virtuous.

I cannot but weep that the political state of this unhappy country has raised such a tumult of passion in the minds of many, as to eradicate those

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I cannot but weep that the political state of this unhappy country has raised such a tumult of passion in the minds of many, as to eradicate those

ideas of general benevolence;—which every human creature owes to his fellow men.

I am sensibly affected at the severe afflictions of a gentleman[2] suffering as a delinquent, when no crime could be charged. Illtreated, abused and refused the common offices of hospitality, only because he had exercised the great duties of humanity towards the routed enemies of America.[3] But while civil discord is brandishing her remorseless sword over this land, we must expect *Charity* will for a time veil her lovely face, and dark suspicion may perhaps ramble in the same breast which was once warmed with every social virtue. Yet I cannot but hope a few months may again restore us to such a peaceful state, that we shall no longer hear the din of arms; that the ambition of our youth may be to cherish the benevolent affections, instead of cultivating the arts of war.

Be assured madam nothing has been wanting to soothe the mind of the first friend of your heart while detained here. I am sensible he needed no aggravations to heighten his regret on leaving his amiable family. I hope madam you are convinced notwithstanding the unworthy suggestions with regard to Mr T—— that his character never suffered the smallest diminuition, in the opinion of those who knew him. His open undisguised manner, has long indicated to them an honesty of heart seldom to be found in this vitiated age; they can forgive his equal enthusiasm for the wealfare of both Great Britain and America.

I doubt not the severe scrutiny of private papers, and private sentiments, through which he has lately passed will evince to the world his integrity and uprightness of intentions. I think he has borne his peculiar trials in a manner that must enhance his reputation with every reasonable person. Yet I am sensible the mind was wounded by a cruel distrust of his regard, to his native country, and an unjust suspicion of that rectitude which I think has hitherto been the rule of Mr Temples conduct.

He has just left us, I have taken a last look at the bark, that wafted by a favourable gale, conveys your friend from the hostile shores. I doubt not you will derive comfort in his absence, from your confidence in the only true source of enjoyment he requested me to beg you would support your spirits, and to tell you he went off with a much lighter heart than he came here. He has left you in the care of the Almighty Governor of the Universe, under whose providential eye he goes forth.

Heaven protect him on his voyage, and return him in safety to his native land, when the American hemisphere shall wear a less lowering aspect, which God grant may be soon! May he through life be equally secure from the deceptive arts, and base intrigues of men in power; and from the outrages of a people driven to despair by the cruel hand of oppression;—who tenacious of their privileges as Englishmen;—have reason to be jealous of the invasion of their rights as men. But the discussion of political disputes is in better hands—and providence if not nature has pointed out the path of duty to our feebler sex. We can only pour out the fervent prayer for the peace of society, and the happiness of those individuals with whom we are connected.

I find in some letters put into my hand by your friend, such a mixture of conjugal affection with a solicitous concern for the distressed state of your country, as convinces me that the warmest wishes for the welfare of the public, are not excluded by your attention to private affliction or the promotion of domestic virtue: this heightens my interest in the speedy return of your partner to his paternal seat (as delightful a spot as perhaps any on the Globe);[4] there may you reside without another interruption to domestic felicity, till the ball of life is wound up and nature makes its last demand.

I shall be glad at all times to hear from you and your daughters. I feel more for you than my pen can express. You may safely convey a line through Cambridge under cover to M^r^ Warren, who presents his affectionate compliments to the wife of his friend.

I am my dear madam, most sincerely yours,

M Warren

MWP1

1. Among other sources on the Temples' difficulties, see *AFC* 2: 87–88n2.

2. Harriet's husband, Robert.

3. Note in Letterbook draft reads, "Some officers of the British army wounded on the Lexington expedition."

4. This refers to the Temple estate, Ten Hills, site of Puritan John Winthrop's original abode in Charlestown along the Mystic River.

19 TO JAMES WARREN

Plimouth june 15 1775

With the highest pleasure I Received the several Letters of my Dearest friend & now having Returnd to my own Habitation I have begun to answer them. I Returnd from a Visit to my father yesterday; the two mrs otis's yesterday[?] Hannah & miss Otis came away with me designing only to accompany me to sandwich but it being a very fine Day they came as far as Plimouth & after spending the afternoon & evening & Regaling several times on the finest strawberys I have seen left me this morning at 10 o clock.[1] But the Beauties of Nature the Bounty of providence nor the social Intercourse of friends can I taste with unalloyed Delight so long as my Country is threatned with Desolation & Bloodshed & my Beloved Husband not only Long absent from me but stationed on Duty in a place where I am greatly Apprehensive of personal Danger to him.

I think the gentlemen of the provincial Congress will injure[?] their Country if they even Hazzard an interruption of their Bussiness Considering how much Depends on their Deliberations at this time. Nor would any one think it Derogatory either to their Honour or Vallour if they would adjourn to some more Distant & safe place for in this Life we are sensible that favour is not always shewn to the cause of the just nor Victory to the strong. But many times though a Cause may be Righteous the lives[?] of a people may be punished by a frown on their public transactions till Each Repentant individual Bespeaks the Divine Blessing. And if we should be Left to fall into the Hands of our Merciless Enemies I shudder to think what scenes of Cruelty & Distress would tear the Bleeding Hearts of such as survive the carnage.

I hope to hear from you this Evening And that you will tell me when & where I shall meet you.

Why do we hear so Little from the Continental Congress? Can they want firmness & Vigour in the grand American Cause? We have seen Gages Arbitrary False & Bloody proclamation. We hear the army is reinforced & is exceedingly formidable & that the Irish & British Cut throats are Ready to come out and execute the most infernal plan gendered in the Morbid Brain of a Hutchinson & Cherished in the Corrupt heart of a North. We hear the Light Horse are to scour the Country within a Week & that we are on the Eve of the most Bloody Battle ever fought in America or even

the fields of flanders.[2] We hear that Vengeance insolence & Rage marks the Brow of the British soldiery while their officers Laugh at the Idea of a Repulse. Need I now say what are my Apprehensions my feelings & my fears? I am not under the presence of a sudden panic nor do I in the Least Despair of the success of the arms of New England yet my Nerves tremble & my heart faints within me at the Thought of the many suffering individuals around while perhaps I must make as great sacrifice myself as any in this generation.

Don't write anything for the sake of keeping up my spirits but Let me know Exactly how present Appearances are in your Eye & how Long our [??] may be safe on the sea coast & whither the Light horse might not Reach taunton[3] if they should happen to take that Road.

Your family are all well except Henry & I think he is the Better for his journey.

With great affection subscribes your
Mercy Warren

MWP2, RC

1. MOW has been in Barnstable on Cape Cod to visit her Otis relatives and describes the return trip. JW is in Watertown with the Provincial Congress.

2. MOW refers to the military movements leading to the Battle of Bunker Hill, June 17, 1775, one of the worst battles of the entire Revolutionary War in terms of numbers of casualties on both sides. Flanders, now the Flemish part of Belgium, was the scene of a number of brutal battles during the medieval period. "Light Horse" refers to mounted infantry.

3. Taunton, Massachusetts, a town about twenty miles west of Plymouth.

20 TO ELLEN HOBART LOTHROP

[MOW's near neighbor in Plymouth, Ellen Hobart Lothrop (d. 1780), was the daughter of Reverend Noah Hobart and the wife of Nathaniel Lothrop (1737–1828), a Harvard-educated physician. Because of their proximity to each other, few letters survive between them, but MOW's affection is clear. A year after this letter, MOW, AA, and Ellen Lothrop all received invitations to board a patriot brig, the *Defence*, when it put up in Plymouth.[1]]

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Plymouth [July?] 1775

A late letter from my dear Mrs L——p has reached my hand; the warm effusions of regard, which naturally flow from a friendly heart are discernable therein.

I daily regret the long absence of a person to whom I could without reserve impart my fears, my hopes, and my pleasures, in such a day as this; when every mind swells with expectation, and every heart expands by anticipating the most important events.[2]

The man you mention which threw this town into so much confusion was a new proof how little fortitude and sound judgment, there is amongst mankind in general; nor can it be recorded as an instance of the valour and prowess of the town of Plymouth in particular.

I think myself fortunate, that I was not alarmed enough to think it necessary to remove any property on the occasion.

Perhaps you will say your friend was not very prudent when I tell you I quieted every symptom of apprehension in my young family, and set out the same day to visit my husband at headquarters. I never thought Plymouth would be an early object with the enemy, when they might bend their operations with so much more advantage to an hundred different parts of this extensive Continent.

It is the general opinion among us, that unless administration, send a much larger reinforcement than has yet arrived;—General Gage will not have it in his power to spread devastation and distress throughout this country. It is highly probable this will e'er long take place: for we have been sufficiently taught that neither justice or humanity will restrain them from the most cruel designs against the Americans.

How long the sword of civil discord, will be brandished over our heads, and the loud artillery of war be thundering in our ears, He only can tell who planteth the nations, and buildeth up kingdoms,—at whose nod the sceptre drops from the hand of the proudest despot, and the haughtiest empires are crumbled into atoms.

I think we have abundant reason to acknowledge that the hand of the Almighty Governor of the universe, has thitherto appeared on our behalf, and if he is for us who can be against us? You know it has been my opinion for a long time that the venality and vice, the glory and grandeur,—the corruption and wickedness, of Great Britain was nearly compleat; and that according to the judicial proceedings of providence from the earliest

records of time, we have little reason to expect the Diadem[?] of Empire will much longer brighten their hemisphere.

The late convulsions are only the natural struggles which ensue when the genius of *liberty* arises to assert her rights in opposition to the ghost of Tyrrany. I doubt not this *fell form* will e'er long be driven from our land;—then may the Western skies behold virtue (which is generally the attendant of freedom) seated on a throne of peace, where may she ever preside over the rising commonwealth of America! I return from the field of imagination to the realities of the day: nor will you refuse to drop a tear with me, over the *Urn* of those brave Patriots who have already fallen in the service of their bleeding country. We also weep the fates of a populous town wrapped in the flames of unrelenting vengeance, while the scattered inhabitants of Charleston are like their distressed brethren, driven from the Capital, obliged to throw themselves on the arm of charity.[3]

The little skirmishes that happen without the gates of Boston, are so frequent, that they cease to alarm: but while the enemy are too weak to come out of their posts and fortresses, they are too strong for us at present, to attempt to force them.

I think you must be very happy with our little agreeable circle of friends at a distance from the noise of war: my regards to the whole, more particularly to my much respected *friend* Madam Hancock; tell her I hope yet to see her in her own delightful habitation at Boston, notwithstanding the locusts now crawl around it. There is not an Egyptian sea into which these devourers may be swept; yet if their master does not timely call them off, the seas of America may be reddened with the blood of her enemies.

I always feel much compassion for the miserable beings who compose a standing army—mere machines with little reflection and less liberty, than the brutes that perish, they bare their bosoms to the point of the sword, to promote the wild projects of some of the most worthless of the human species.

To what a length has my letter run before I have said one word about your return; your house looks very gloomy and as I seldom go out of the sight thereof, you cannot wonder I wish to see it look a little more lively.

Plymouth both as to its external appearance and its internal dispositions is much the same as when you left it, nothing more extraordinary has lately taken place than your friend, ——————————————————————————————————————[4]

Here you will cry how variable and uncertain is the conduct of the little actors on this unstable Theatre!

If Mr Warren was at home he would unite with me in best regards to our friends at Fairfield; but as his time is almost wholly devoted to the public, he resides little at Plymouth this summer.

Do you not begin to wish your correspondent would not be quite so prolix? Patience my friend, I will throw aside the pen as soon as I have subscribed the name of yours invariably,
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2. Ellen Lothrop appears to have fled Plymouth—she lived across the street from the Warrens—for her hometown of Fairfield, Connecticut. She might possibly be staying with her brother, John Sloss Hobart, at her parents' home.

3. During the Bunker Hill fight, the British burnt Charlestown, across the river from Boston, causing considerable damage to that city and leaving hundreds homeless.

4. Omission indicated thus in manuscript. Unfortunately for modern scholars, Warren seems to have occasionally excised personal material from her recopied letters.

21 TO HARRIET SHIRLEY TEMPLE

Plymouth July 30th 1775

My dear Madam,

The confusion of the times leaves me uncertain to what place to direct an answer to your last agreeable letter: but wherever this finds you, may it be in some happy part of this variable world.

I take a large share in the painful vicissitudes, you have experienced within a few months;—was this a fix, and permanent state we might justly exclaim at the unequal distributions of providence;—we see the good and virtuous groaning under the pressure of misfortune, and innocence borne down and suffering in a tide of affliction, while the guilty triumph in successful villany, and the dark deeds of venality, oppression, and hypocricy,

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proper in the stained palm of the high-handed offender. But as the thorny road we tread is but a prelude to a more durable existence, who can pronounce decisively what events of time may be deemed, either unfortunate or happy, however varied the aspects which mark the designations of heaven.

What a consolation is it that a midst the severest afflictions the ear of him who holds the balance of nature in his hand, is open to the cry of the distressed: and when the veil that now darkens our paths shall be drawn aside, and the grand oeconomy of the universe disclosed to our wondering eyes, the whole rational creation will acknowledge both the wisdom and goodness of the final adjustment.

I lately rode hastily by your once beautiful and pleasant habitation; but had not an idea that you still resided there amidst the devastation and danger that surround it. I had been informed that you left Ten Hills, soon after the sad catastrophe of the town of Charlestown[1]—otherways nothing should have prevented me calling on a Lady I so much esteem. I much regretted that it was not in my power to see you afterward, but many circumstance made it necessary for me to return immediately to Plymouth. There I hope for a visit before the approaching autumn is past;—you will make us happy by spending a little time in this part of the country.

Your friends M^{r} and M^{rs} Bowdoin[2] are in our neighbourhood;—they left me yesterday after a visit of two or three days: I was afflicted that they were obliged to hasten their return home by the indisposition of so good a man. His health is so far impaired that it appears to me his friends will 'ere long be deprived of the society of so valuable a person, and his country of his assistance at a time when it stands in the utmost need of men of the best abilities and integrity, to strengthen the councels, and aid in extricating from the complicated difficulties into which America is plunged.

Heaven grant that the civil sword which now hangs over us, may be resheathed before it is again dipped in human gore! May the convulsions of war which shake this miserable land, and the animosities of party which agitate the bosom of individuals subside! Oh! that tranquility may be restored by the return of justice to preside over us with harmony at his right hand, to bring back the alienated affections of a divided people, and to spread peace over an empire rent in sunder by the machinations of a few ambitious and evil minded men.

When you write again you will let me know if you have heard from M^r^ Temple. My regards to your amiable daughters any of whom I shall be glad to see at my house.
I am unfeignedly your friend
M Warren

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1. Note in Letterbook draft reads, "Burnt by the British."

2. James Bowdoin (1726–90), Massachusetts patriot, and his wife, Elizabeth Erving Bowdoin (1731–1809). Their daughter Elizabeth (1750–1809) had married John Temple (1732–98), later Sir John, who was Harriet Temple's brother-in-law and a customs officer in Boston before the war.

22 TO CATHARINE SAWBRIDGE MACAULAY

Plimouth N.E. August 24, 1775

At A time when all Europe is Interested in the Fate of America you will forgive me Dear Madam if I lay Asside the Ceremony usually observed where there is no Attachment that Arises either from Affection or Esteem, & again call of your Attention when I have Not been Assured of the Welcome Reception of my Last. In that I hinted that the sword was half Drawn from the scabbard. Soon after which this people were obliged to unsheath it to Repel the Violence offered to Individuals, & the Insolence of an Attempt to seize the private property of the subjects of the king of England, And thereby put it out of their power to Defend themselves against the corrupt Ministers of His Court.

You have Doubtless Madam been Apprized of the Consequences of this Hostile Movement which compeled the Americans to fly to arms in Defence of all that is held dear & sacred among Mankind. And the public papers as well as private accounts have Witnessed to the Bravery of the peasants of Lexington & the spirit of Freedom Breath'd from the Inhabitants of the surrounding Villages. You have been told of the Distresses of the people of Boston, And the shamful violation of faith which will leave a stain on the Memory of A certain general officer so long as the obligations of Honour & Truth are held sacred among Men.[1] He often sporting with the Miseries of the Wretched suffering till Famine & pestilence began to

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Rage in the city, permited the Most of them to Depart leaving their Effects behind & to quit their Elegant & convenient Habitations in the Capital & fly Naked into the Hospitable arms of their Brethren in the Country. And the Conflagration of Charlstown will undoubtedly Reach Each British Ear before this comes to your Hand. Such instances of Wanton Barbarity have been seldom practiced even among the Most Rude & uncivilized Nations. The ties of Gratitude which were Broken through by the kings troops in this Base translation greatly Enhances their guilt. It was the inhabitants of that town who prompted by Humanity generously opened their doors to the routed Corps on the Nineteenth of April, & poured Balm into the Wounds of the Exhausted & dying soldiers after their precipitant Retreat. Had they observed a Different Conduct on that Memorable day, Had they Assisted in cuting off Ld. Percy's retreat, it Might not have been in the power of General Gage to have Wraped that town in Flames & Driven out the Miserable Inhabitants the prey of poverty & Despair.[2]

But a particular Detail of the sufferings of the Massachusets you will have from other Hands. I shall therfore only give a short Account of the present situation of American affairs. In the environs of Boston We have a well Appointed Brave & High spirited Continental Army consisting of about twenty two thousand Men, commanded by the Accomplished George Washington Esq A Gentleman of one of the first Fortunes in America. A man whose Military Abilities & public & private Virtues place Him in the first class of the Good & Brave & one really of so High a stamp as to do Honour to Human Nature. This army is to be occasionally Recruited & to be supported & paid at the expense of the United Colonies of America. And were Britain powerful & Infatuated Enough to find out a power sufficiant to cut of[f] to a Man this little resolute army, less than the compass of a week would Exhibit in the Feild Thrice their Numbers Ready to Avenge the stroke & to call down the justice of Heaven on the Destroyers of the peace, Liberty & Happiness of Mankind.

In compliance with the Recommendation of the Continental Congress, the Massachusets have at last Reassumed the powers of government. The provincial Congress sent out A writ for calling a House of Representatives & Agreable to the Charter of Wm & Mary they proceeded to Elect 28 Counselors, and considering the Govr & Lieut as Abscent, the supreme Authority of of [*sic*] the province was vested in any fifteen of the Number.

Thus after living without government, without Law, and without any Regular Administration of justice for more than 12 Months, we are just Returning from a state of Nature to the subordinations of civil society.

The Grand Counsel of America[3] have once more petitioned His Majesty to Devise some Methods of Reconciliation. This is A final proof with what Reluctance the progeny of Britain Draw forth the sword against their unnatural parent. Both the Ministerial & the American armies seem at present to be Rather on the Defensive as if each were wishing for some Benign Hand to Interpose & heal the Dreadful Contest without leting out the Blood from the Bosom of their Brethren.

But fond as this people are of Restoration of that Harmony which Has Added Riches & strength to the power of Britain, yet so tenatious are we of the Birth Rights of Nature & the fair possession of Freedom which no power on Earth has a Right to curtail, that we shall Never give up the Invaluable Claim, But with the Warm Currant which plays round the Heart and Animates the Breast to Resist the arm of Tyrany. Thus disposed to welcome the bright image of peace if at the same time that she appears with the olive branch in the one Hand, the other holds forth a Radical Redress of greviances stamped with such a signet as May not be Broken either by the corrupt practices of openly Abandoned Men or the Machinations of perfidious Traytors, who profane the Heavenly Name of Virtue by puting on the guize that they may more securly perpetrate Every species of Iniquity.

I fear Notwithstanding the Efforts of A Virtuous & sensible Minority, the Ministerial Hirelings will pursue their Mad projects till the sceptre Drops from the Hands of Royalty & the Mistress of the Iles sits solitary & Alone, till she becomes the Derission of Nations & the contempt of her enemies. But will not their confusion be inexpressable when Disappointed in every Vissionary scheme, when perhaps ere long they may see the ports of America t[h]rown open to every foreign power & the Mart of the Whole World be fix'd in the Western Regions? What were the united provinces when the contest began with Spain in comparison with the united colonies of this Wide extended Continent?

Although I have Already Detained you longer than I Designed, I cannot close without observing to you Dear Madam that the protest of the Dissenting Lords and the conduct of several Members of Both Houses with

regard to American affairs is Never Mentioned but with every Expression of Approbation & Applause. The noble example of Lord Effingham[4] will be Remembered in the Historic page, but at the same time that it transmits his Name with Honour to posterity, it will evince to Future ages the Corruption of the times that such an Instance of Disinterested Merit should stand Recorded almost alone. One who has heretofore been [??] with your correspondence subscribes with the Highest Esteem a Daughter of America.

Mercy Warren

Macaulay Papers, Gilder Lehrman Collection, New-York Historical Society, RC

1. MOW probably refers to General Thomas Gage, whom she blamed for what she saw as a betrayal in allowing the offensive movements that led to the battles at Lexington, Concord, and Bunker Hill. See her comment on Gage at the bottom of the paragraph.

2. Brigadier General Hugh, Lord Percy, the commander of British troops during the battles of Lexington and Concord, had a difficult time returning to his base at Boston on April 19, 1775. She suggests that the destruction of Charlestown two months later might not have occurred had Percy's forces been stopped.

3. I.e., the Continental Congress.

4. Thomas Howard (1746–91), third earl of Effingham, captain in the Twenty-second Foot, who resigned his military commission in 1775 rather than serve in the British army against the Americans. See Stephen Conway, "British Military Officers and the American War for Independence," *William and Mary Quarterly* 41, no. 2 (1984): 266.

23 TO JOHN THOMAS

[John Thomas (1724–76) of Massachusetts served as an officer under George Washington in the siege of Boston and captured Roxbury from the British on March 4, 1776. He was sent to Quebec two months later in a failed military operation and died of smallpox. Thomas was but one of many men in positions of authority to whom MOW fearlessly wrote at a time when married women generally confined their correspondence to female friends or family members.]

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January 10 1776

Sir,

My Anxiety for the Daughter of a brother who has not only stood high on the Affection & Esteem of his Friends, but was Early Distinguished for his generous Exertions in the Cause of his injured[?] Country by the Enemies of America & the Malignant Foes of Every Individual who Asserted her Rights, induces me to Ask the Favour of you to convey the Enclosed Letter into Boston & be kind Enough to let me know its success.

Perhaps a Weak Infatuated Woman who has heretofore Brought innumerable Dificulties upon her own Family May still Detain this lovly Girl till they are all involved in one Common Ruin.[1] But if she complys, your Humanity will lead you to pay some Attention to the safety of the Child till she can be conveyed to Plimouth & the same principle in your Breast Makes it Needless to Appoligize for giving you this trouble.

But if from the Circumstances of the times you think There is an impropriety in making the Attempt you will postpone it to some more Convenient season.

I am sir with Much Esteem
your obliged friend & humble servant,
M Warren

JTP3, RC

1. MOW refers to one of the daughters of JO2, most likely Elizabeth, who eventually married a British officer. The "Weak Infatuated Woman" probably means Ruth Cunningham Otis, JO2s wife, a person much disliked by MOW and the other Otises.

24 TO JAMES WARREN

[While the first hostile actions of the Revolution took place in Massachusetts, an expeditionary force, under the direction of General Richard Montgomery, made its way to Canada with the hope of seizing Quebec and thereby securing the northern frontier. The British badly defeated the Americans there and killed Montgomery among others on December 31, 1775. Once word reached Plymouth, MOW decided to reach out to the war

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widow, Janet Livingston Montgomery, sister to Chancellor Robert Livingston of New York, an important figure in the politics of New York State. The letters that follow include a cover letter written to JW and the Letterbook draft of a letter written to Janet Montgomery (which JW forwarded to her). Further exchanges with Janet and with her sister, Catherine Livingston, followed over the next two decades.]

Jan [20] 1776

Compassion is all we can offer to the Distressed & Commiseration is at all times due to our fellow Men under the common misfortunes of Life but when others are Rendered unhappy by their Interests being Closly Interwoven with ours[?] the obligation is Enl—[?].

This Consideration Induces me to think it A Duty to Endeavour to console the Bleeding Breast of a Widow, Robed of the Companion of her life in supporting the Common Cause of America. Yet I am not certain I should have Attempted this friendly office had it not been proposed & urged by my Good Neighbour & friend mrs. L——p,[1] but I have only two objections in my mind: the one Least you should [??] me for my scribling humours[?]; the other from Difidence whither I could Execute the Attempt in a manner pleasing to the Eye of A stranger[?]. If you think the Last is done when you peruse the inclosed & will be very moderate in the first I shall be obliged if you will seal & Direct & by some safe hand transit to mrs Montgomery, who if she has the same tender feelings with your Marcia[2] will think herself obliged for this Billet of Condolence.

Mr Adams mr Lothrop or some of your Acquaintance will Readily take Charge of it. I thought it not improper just to name mr Otis in the manner I did as I have heard him speak of Dining frequently at judge Livingstons & I believe this very Lady was the very agreable miss Livingston dressed in the Manufactures of America to Entertain the Congress at her brothers table when they met at N York 1775.[3]

I am quite Impatient [??] nor hear so seldom from you Not one Word since the 17th. I know tis for want of opportunities.

[no signature]

MWP2, draft

1. Ellen Lothrop.

2. Marcia, like AA's Portia, was a Romanized pen name she used in correspondence with her husband and the Adamses. Rosemarie Zagarri suggests MOW borrows it from the wife of the Roman orator Hortensius, without further comment. See *A Woman's Dilemma: Mercy Otis Warren and the American Revolution* (Wheeling, Ill.: Harlan Davidson, 1995), 85. But the meaning behind such a name is much more complex than Zagarri suggests. That same Marcia was originally married to Cato the Younger, the famed republican, who in turn gave a pregnant Marcia to his friend Hortensius for a wife at the latter's request. At Hortensius's death, Cato remarried Marcia. Thus the original idea may simply have been that Marcia was a Roman matron with strong republican views. But Cato and Marcia had a daughter named Marcia, who, in Joseph Addison's play *Cato*, was a vigorous opponent of Caesar. Therefore, it is equally possible that MOW identified with the daughter of republicans as much as she did the wife of one. See Philip Hicks, "Portia and Marcia: Female Political Identity and the Historical Imagination, 1770–1800," *William and Mary Quarterly* 62 (2005): 265–94. In addition, in her political plays, she uses the name Hortensius to refer to JA rather than her own husband, whom she styles as Rusticus.

3. MOW refers in turn to John Adams, Nathaniel Lothrop (husband of Ellen), JQ2, Judge Robert Livingston (the father of Janet Montgomery), Janet Montgomery (before she was married), and Chancellor Robert Livingston (Janet's brother).

25 TO JANET LIVINGSTON MONTGOMERY

Plymouth January 20th 1776

Whilst all America weeps the loss of the brave Montgomery, his amiable Lady will permit a stranger of her own sex, to mingle the sympathetic Sigh and to pour the tear of condolence, into her wounded bosom.

And though her sorrow may be too recent and too big to admit an immediate abatement, it may be some consolation to know that while the Public mourns the death of the hero and the patriot, the compassionate individual commiserates the breach on private happiness, and the interruption of social and domestic felicity. Yet when the united voice of America aroused his martial Genius and prompted him to lend his valiant arm to repel the insolence of power and to struggle with the despotic Foes of the unalienable rights of man; the uncertain events of war, and the viciosity[?] of all human affairs, doubtless, Madam, had such an influence on your mind as to lead you to the font of perfection, the spring of every virtue,

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Whilst all America weeps the loss of the brave Montgomery, his amiable Lady will permit a stranger of her own sex, to mingle the sympathetic Sigh and to pour the tear of condolence, into her wounded bosom.

And though her sorrow may be too recent and too big to admit an immediate abatement, it may be some consolation to know that while the Public mourns the death of the hero and the patriot, the compassionate individual commiserates the breach on private happiness, and the interruption of social and domestic felicity. Yet when the united voice of America aroused his martial Genius and prompted him to lend his valiant arm to repel the insolence of power and to struggle with the despotic Foes of the unalienable rights of man; the uncertain events of war, and the viciosity[?] of all human affairs, doubtless, Madam, had such an influence on your mind as to lead you to the font of perfection, the spring of every virtue,

which alone is able to give fortitude sufficient to bear us above the tumults of time, the painful convulsions of civil discord, and the decisive stroke which dissolves the tenderest ties of human happiness.

But while you are deriving comfort from the highest source, it may still further brighten the clouded moment[?] to reflect that the number of your friends are not confined to the narrow limits of a Province, but by the happy union of the American Colonies (suffering equally by the rigour of oppression) the affections of the inhabitants are cemented; and the Urn of the companion of your heart will be sprinkled with the tears of thousands who revere the character of the commander at the gates of Quebec, though not personally acquainted with General Montgomery.

And though he fell with the laurels fresh blooming on his brow, every lover of his country will regret the premature stroke that robbed it of an officer of such tried and acknowledged merit.

The Canadian field will be distinguished in the annals of time and marked with peculiar glory when future ages shall wreath the garland picked from the choicest flowers of fame to crown the memory of a Wolfe[1] & a Montgomery. While one of those illustrious names written in characters of blood gives additional honour to the glorious reign of a British Monarch, the other will announce to posterity the efforts of virtue (in a painful era) to resist the tyranny of his successors.

But perhaps Madam, you will be ready to say the gratitude of contemporaries and the plaudits of the admiring world are light in the balance when the tears of the orphaned babe and the painful agitation of the widowed bosom are laid in the opposite scale. And indeed though we silently acquiesce in the designations of Providence and adore the sovereign arbiter of the fates of men, one is almost led to ask why the generous, the virtuous, and the noble minded Patriot, the active and the intrepid hero are often cut down e'er they reach the meridian of life?—while the hoary delinquent triumphs in successful villany and the grey-headed betrayer of his country stretches out his stained palm to receive the wages of iniquity till it trembles with age, and still adds score to score to the tale of his years spent in the service of venality.

But we must check the bold inquiry. Shall the Creature of an hour whose Ideas are circumscribed to follow the vestiges of an all perfect Being arraign the doings of him who holds the balance of nature in his hand? When the impenetrable veil which now darkens the ways of Heaven shall

be drawn aside, and the grand oeconomy of the universe finally adjusted, the loud acclaim of every excellent being through the wide system of Creation, will be the reward of valour suffering in the cause of virtue. Then the guilty Despot, whose ambition has been the source of every species of misery to his fellow men shall (with his wretched associates) reap that kind of retribution due to crimes emblazoned with the dignity of the perpetrator, whether ennobled with a Coronet or a Diadem while acting on the narrow Theatre of this lower world.

You will madam excuse this interruption from one who may never be so happy as to have a personal acquaintance with Mrs. Montgomery, when assured it arises from a love of virtue, from the tenderest feelings of humanity to the distressed, and from a particular respect and affection to the votaries of freedom, and to the distinguished supporters of the righteous cause which ingrosses not only the attention of the American Continent but of the European World.

If Judge Livingston recollects the name of Mr Otis (once distinguished for his manly exertions in favour of the rights of society) he and his family will accept the respectful compliments of his sister. If you madam should ever think it worth while to inquire after your unknown correspondent you will direct to James Warren Esqr. for your sympathizing friend &
very Humble Servt.
M Warren

MWP1

1. General James Wolfe, commander of British forces at the battle of Quebec during the Seven Years War, who died during the British victory over the French on September 13, 1759. Period paintings of the deaths of Wolfe, Montgomery, and Joseph Warren, the fallen hero at Bunker Hill, all use a remarkably similar composition, framing the dying general in a theatrical pose. MOW captures here how Americans read Montgomery's death: as equivalent to that of one of Britain's most famous military heroes of the eighteenth century.

26 TO JAMES WARREN

[Although the condition of this letter leaves many words uncertain, it provides a rare glimpse into the Warren household and an idea of how MOW managed her family's affairs, particularly the education of her sons, with her husband absent.]

Plimouth Feb 11 1776

[??] how much do I daily stand in need of your advice. I am more & and more convinced how poorly I am qualified for the important [??] providence has bestowed[?] upon me. I wish to acquit myself in such a manner as to gain the approbation of my judge when I am called to give an account of my [??]. I sometimes fear that either my too tender passions or[?] too[?] high a sense of parental authority may land me into error[?]—yet how thankful am I that my Children are about me—amiable creatures. Heaven Gaurd their excellent father through many years to Come and prepare us both for the changes[?] of time. May we equally through the painful and pleasing scenes of life adore the sovereign hand that directs our lot. When my case is filled with good things I will praise the Beneficent [??] and if my brightest hopes are cut off yet will[?] I Glorify his name—though he slay me yet will I trust in the rock of my salvation. I am sensible I do wrong to check[?] the lingering[?] hours[?] away[?] where with the swiftest speed they are flying from us; but how weak is my heart. You can better imagine than I can describe the variety of reflections when my little flock is around me and their papah absent: that croud upon me in spite of myself. The tryals of the day are severe indeed and the anticipations of future scenes of distress often fill with perturbations my too feeling mind.

You will perhaps imagine I am in very low spirits. Be not concerned. I am not indeed—so far from it since your absence I have been generally very chearful—I will not say gay—but all your family as well as myself most ardently wish the return of their father.

Your little George is standing in the corner at my elbow. With his usual gravity which does not cover his propensity to smile at the request himself desires I would give you the important inteligence that he has caught two [??] birds—thus in Gradation we rise in our views from stage to stage. Henry is reading Telemachus. Charles on the other side the table studying the History of England. Winslow in your armed chair before the fire

engaged with plutarch lives and the story of ancient republics. Your Eldest son is on a visit to his Grandfather.[1] May they all improve their opportunities in a manner worthy of the sons of a father engaged in the Grand System of American politics [??] and of a mother whose assiduity to guide them properly is quickend by Duty reflection & maternal pride.

I want to hear of the manuvers of General Lee among the yorkers.[2]

How does the affair of Canada affect the spirits of Gen Washington? I suppose his spirits do not sink on the occasion either as a man or as an officer of Valour. By the politeness and friendly expressions in mrs Washington & the other Ladies billets & Letters, I suppose many questions will be asked when you go to head quarters; again about your Marcia. Till then I expect to see those[?] at plimouth—at the houses of the polite, the center of bussiness & the seat of inteligence. I think I should find [??] to entertain the most[?] inquisitive of any [??] and many things worth communicating to [??] but[?] little things [??] for the amusement of your affectionate
M Warren

MWP2, RC

1. MOW carefully catalogs the achievements of her five sons, moving from youngest to oldest. Henry is probably reading John Hawkesworth's translation of François de Salignac de la Mothe-Fénelon, *The Adventures of Telemachus, the Son of Ulysses* (London: W. and W. Strahan, 1768). Charles might be consulting any number of popular histories of England—David Hume, Oliver Goldsmith, and Tobias Smollett all had books by that title, although Hume's was perhaps the best known. Winslow has before him the Greek writer Plutarch, whose *Lives* of the ancients was near as oft consulted as the Bible during the eighteenth century and existed in numerous editions and translations; as for Winslow's other book, it could be any number of texts, but possibly Edward Wortley Montagu, *Reflections on the Rise and Fall of the Ancient Republics* (London: A. Miller, 1759). Son James is no doubt with his grandfather Otis in Barnstable. For a look at MOW's own reading, see William Cibbarelli, "Libraries of the Mind: A Study of the Reading Histories of Mercy Warren, Abigail Adams and Judith Sargent Murray (1728–1820)" (PhD diss., State University of New York at Stony Brook, 2000), 24–65.

2. One of the first among many MOW references to General Charles Lee (1732–82), the American military commander whose doubtful loyalty to the Revolutionary cause ultimately led to his dismissal.

27 TO JOHN ADAMS

[In early 1776, with the crisis of independence looming, MOW engaged in a compelling exchange over the nature of a future American government and society with JA, by now her most trusted male friend outside her family and a major player in the coming Revolution. She responds to his letter of January 8, 1776, which can be found in *PJA*3, 397–99. For a slightly different version of MOW's letter (the RC), see *PJA*4, 49–52.]

Plymouth March [10] 1776

Dear Sir,

As your time is so much devoted to the service of the republic, you can have little leisure for letters of mere friendship, or amusement. I have therefore been sometime balancing in my own mind, whether I should again interrupt your important moments:—but on reperusing yours of the eighth of January, I find a query unanswered. Your asking my opinion on so momentous a point as the form of *government which ought to be preferred* by a people, about to shake off the fetters of monarchic and aristocratic tyranny may be designed to ridicule the sex for paying any attention to political matters. Yet I shall venture to give you a serious reply.

Notwithstanding the love of *dress*, *dancing*, *and equipage*—notwithstanding the fondness for finery, folly, and fashion, is so strongly predominant in the female mind, I hope never to see a Monarchy established in America, however fashionable in Europe. Nor however it might coincide with the taste for elegance and pleasure in the one sex or cooperate with the passions, the interest, or ambition of the other, shall I ever be an advocate for such a form,—not even "*to make you rich.*"[1]

I have long been an admirer of a republican goverment, and was convinced, even before I saw the advantages delineated in so clear and concise a manner by your pen;—that if established in the genuine principles of equal liberty,—it was a *form* productive of many excellent qualities, and heroic virtues in human nature—which often lie dormant for want of opportunities for exertion. The heavenly spark is smothered in the corruption of Courts, or its lustre obscured in the pompous glares of royal pageantry.

It is the opinion of the celebrated Burgh—that "almost all political establishments are the creatures of chance rather than of wisdom:—and

that there are few instances of a people forming for themselves a constitution from the foundation—therefore there is scarcely an example of such a phenomenon as a perfect Commonwealth."[2]

But we will yet hope the present generation will leave one to posterity,—and that the American republic will come as near the point of perfection, as the condition of humanity will admit. That listning to the dictates of *common sense*, the Amphyctionic[3] body will not be obliged to yield to the violence of party—or the blindness of private or provincial prejudices, and leave the work half finished. Shall the incompleat fabric hang tottering under its own weight, to be shoared up and cemented with the blood of succeeding generations?

However, we may indulge the pleasing *review*[?] and look forward with delight, on the well compacted government and happy establishments of the civil police of the United Colonies.

Yet, with you Sir, I have my *fears*, that American virtue has not yet reached that sublime pitch which is necessary to baffle the designs of the artful,—to counteract the weakness of the timid, or to resist the pecuniary temptations and ambitious wishes that will arise in the breast of many.

We shall soon have a test and if the union of the Colonies, and a steady opposition to the disgraceful idea of foreign shackles still subsist, after negotiating with a set of men, picked for the purpose of flattering, terrifying, and cajoling, the Colonists, into compliances, which their principles, their interests, their honour, and even their strength forbids,—I shall have hopes that America has more than *one politician*, who has abilities to *make the character of the people, to extinguish vices, and follies he finds—and to create the virtues he sees wanting*.

Many among us are ready to flatter themselves that an accommodation with Britain is yet easy, and that we shall soon see the return of halcyon days. Others think that we have little to expect from Commissioners, sent from a haughty, venal, luxurious Court, acting in the name of a despotic Prince:—they will never submit to such humiliating conditions, as the justice and the safety of America now demands.

I agree Sir, to the bargain you propose, and I think you cannot recede, when a lady has accepted your proposals:—but I must ingenuously tell you the pleasure you promise yourself will be very inadiquate to the advantages, I expect to reap by the compliance. In return to my imperfect characters and observations, I expect to be made acquainted with the genius,

the taste, the manners not only of the most distinguished characters in America, but of the nobility of Britain: and perhaps before the conflict is over, with some of the dignified personages who have held the regalia of crowns and scepters, and in the zenith of power are the dancing puppets of other European courts.

America must take her rank & send her Ambassadors abroad, and I expect you will be one of them. But the sphere of female life is too narrow to afford much entertainment to the wise and learned, who are called to exhibit some of the most capital scenes in the drama, and to tread the theatre where they will not only have a *world* of spectators—but at a tie when they are sure posterity will scrutinize the steps of the Philadelphian actors,—and censure or applaud according to the imbelicity, or the vigour and magnanimity that marks their conduct.

The subjects I have touched are so diffuse that I have been imperceptibly led beyond the limits I designed, I only add the warmest wishes that friendship can dictate for the happiness of you and yours. You will soon gratify with a line and an assurance of pardon for the freedom and length of this from your very
Humble Servant
M Warren

MWP1

1. Note in Letterbook draft reads, "M^r^ Adams had observed in a letter 'that monarchy would make him rich.'" JA had indeed said that, although with the point of affirming republican government. However, this passage does not appear in the RC. The editors of the *Papers of John Adams* suggest this might have been added during the period when MOW and JA were at odds, which would have been the 1790s and early 1800s. See *PJA*4: 52n2. However, it is also possible that she simply deleted it before sending the letter but did not mark the deletion in her retained rough draft or remember many years later that she had not included the passage in the sent copy.

2. This passage expresses the spirit of much of James Burgh, *Political Disquisitions*, 3 vols. (London: E. and C. Dilly, 1774–75), who argued that government should be in the hands of the people, the proper check to unwarranted government power. The precise wording is the following: "Almost all political establishments have been the creatures of chance rather than of wisdom. There are few instances of a people forming for themselves a constitution from the foundation. Therefore it is impossible to say what would be the effect of a perfect commonwealth; there being no example of such a phænomenon" (1:23).

3. In Greek mythology, the Amphyctions were guardians of religion and of the riches in the Temple of Delphos. A similar reference is made in *The Federalist Papers* in Paper No. 18, December 7, 1787.

28 TO DOROTHY QUINCY HANCOCK

[The correspondent below, Dorothy Quincy Hancock (1747–1830), was the daughter of Edmund Quincy and thus cousin to MOW's acquaintances Hannah Quincy Lincoln and Josiah Quincy Jr. Dolly, as she was nicknamed, married the wealthy merchant and Revolutionary political figure John Hancock (1737–93) on August 28, 1775, and by him had two children: Lydia in 1776 (although she died in 1777) and George Washington in 1778, about whom more will be said in the notes to L 85. The Warrens and John Hancock, although on the same side in the war, differed politically; by 1778, JW and Hancock were rivals for the influence of Massachusetts's future course. Although at the time of this letter the Warrens already had doubts about John Hancock's commitment to the republican cause, MOW swallows those in order to continue contact with the politician's "lady," renewing a friendship that must have begun well before Dolly's marriage.]

Plymouth [c. April] 1776[1]

Madam

I know my dear and much respected friend is led by her general benevolence, to wish to hear from any one in her own distressed Province; but from many circumstances, I have reason to flatter myself the motives of private friendship, will make a line acceptable from one, who, with the most cordial sincerity congratulates her on every event that contributes to her satisfaction and repose.

While the sword hung over us, and devastation and flame were daily threatning to pervade the Capital, one could scarcely write without mixing in every sentence some reflections too painful for your tender feelings to peruse, with out dropping the tears of pity over your native town;—but now the hostile invader (with remarkable precipitations) is driven before

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the brave, magnanimous, humane commander of the American forces, do not more cheerful accents become us? Yet will we stand still and adore that superintending providence which secretly directs the operations of men.

While we detest the ignominious plunderers of Boston, and admire the traits of greatness which mark the footsteps of their conqueror, let us never forget that he who rules creation with a glance, has caused the guilty to fly; and that it is he alone who inspires with valour, virtue, and wisdom, sufficient to defeat the machinations of an obstinate, powerful and unrelenting foe.

I shall not pretend madam to write you any thing by way of intelligence at this interesting period, when every passenger has his tale and every tongue is eager to communicate, even the minutia of public transactions, and military manoeuvres, as well as the more remarkable occurrences of private life. Yet though affection and esteem were my inducements for taking up the pen, I cannot help chatting a little with my excellent friend on the political aspects which seem to threaten the downfall of kingdoms and the rise of empires.

But while we rejoice at the opening glories of America, who can forbear to pity that infatuated power which has imbrued its hands in the blood of its children? Nor will the compassionate tear cease to flow when we survey the interruption of social felicity and the many sacrifices of happiness and life which must doubtless be made before the contest subsides.

When America takes her rank among the nations, which I hope we shall soon see, what will become of that misguided prince whose scepter and peace, whose conscience and crown he seems determined to hazard at the altar of despotism. But I leave him to his own fate to make an observation on a more respectable character, on one whose conscious worth sets him above the regalia of Kings. The men who amidst the elegancies of affluence quits the delights of domestic felicity, and from the noblest principles engages in defence of his country and through all the fatigues and horrors of war appears with peculiar dignity:—When to the courage and intrepidity of the hero, is added the virtues of social and private life, we know not which to admire most, the patriot, the friend, or the husband.

Though madam you are not acquainted with General Washington, you will know this is a resemblance of his character;—he and his agreeable Lady left us yesterday,—he has borne of[f] with him the applause and the

prayers of all the northern part of America. Mrs Washington is amiable in her deportment and sweet in her manners, and I am very glad he has a companion so well qualified to soften the cares and toils of war.

The removal of the continental and the disgraceful flight of the ministerial army has made such an alternation here as can scarcely be described; instead of the bustle of a camp and the busy preparations for attack and defence, a dead silence reigns through the long extended lines. The total stagnation of business within and the still calm without the walls of Boston, resembles that serenity which often succeeds the most violent concussions in the world of nature.

I know madam your compassionate heart heaves a sigh of pity for the miserable group indiscriminately hurried on ship board to escape the just resentment of their affronted injured country. Do you think there was ever a more sudden reverse of hopes and expectations than these poor creatures suffer? They are certainly the object of commiseration and contempt.

I should be happy to have a line before you reach your own delightful residence which to the surprize of every one has escaped the outrages of the enemy. Mr Warren joins in compliments of unfeigned regard, to you and the good family you are with. I am my dear madam, with the highest esteem your affectionate friend and

Able Servt

M Warren

MWP1

1. The letterbook date is March 13, 1776, but the content suggests the letter was written some time in April. The British did not evacuate Boston until March 17, nor did Washington report the evacuation to Congress until a few days later. Therefore, while the letter might have been written in March, it would have been after the 13th.

29 TO JAMES WARREN JR.

[In his last year at Harvard, JW2 appears to have suffered some form of depression or nervous collapse; AA reported to her husband in a portion of a letter dated May 27 that young James had been "carried home" and "disorderd in his mind" (*AFC*1: 418, 419n7). Therefore, one wonders about the date of this letter. Presumably,

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MOW learned of his mental state and wrote this to buck him up in early May, but received notice he was not fit to continue his studies and brought him home by late May. He eventually took his degree in 1776 with the rest of his class. However, see note 1.]

Plymouth, June 1776

I doubt not the mind of my dear James has been greatly agitated by the expectation of painful tidings since the long confinement of his mother; but returning health enables me to take up my pen and remind you again that youth is the happy season when the ideas flow quick and memory secures the acquisition and makes the literary labours of every hour its own. Nature has given you a thirst for knowledge and leisure and inclination has taught you to soar to distinction in the early path of science.

From your own reflection—from your sensibility and regard to character you stand in as little need of frequent admonitions against the insinuations of criminal pleasure as any one of your age; but who can pronounce himself safe? All writers on morals, religion, and philosophy agree, that the great business of life is the regulating of the passions and subjugating those appetites which tend to inflame them and to waken the powers of the mind until it forgets the law of reason.

Can this work be too early begun or too assiduously attended to? Consider how easily youth glide into error and error justified or indulged generally ends in vice. The best disposed mind may through inadvertence or the evil influence of unworthy companions fall into a snare, but the *monster vice* a second time listened to gains such an advantage over the devoted victim, that she generally erects her empire in his mind in spite of the feeble struggles of the sinking delinquent. He may at first despise himself or the weakness of his resolutions, but familiarized by habit, a torpor ensues till by degrees he looses the detestation, nor has the power or the inclination to resist the most shameful debaucheries.

Of all the arts used to undermine the basis of virtue there are none more fatal than the keen shafts of ridicule; but I have little doubt you have laid it down as an invariable rule of action that when once the moral sense in your bosom witnesses the rectitude of your intentions, and evinces the folly of a different conduct, you will equally despise the grin of fools and the sarcastic smiles of licentious wit.

Whoever bears about him this conscious merit, may ever look up with heart-felt independence that rests not on another for happiness though he fills the most dignified station; and with that pleasing assurance that denotes the well-bred man much more than the airs of the dancing master or the education of the drawing room.

Yet some small attention may be paid to the lesser accomplishments of person without interfering with the cultivation of the mental faculties or strengthening the habits of virtue in the mind. He who has once learned to set a proper value on time is in no great danger of squandering much of it in idle amusements or the more senseless folly of dress:—though it has become too much the fashion of the times even in your sex—and I believe you have seen instances in the Academy when some have been more solicitous for the adjustments of the *toupee*, than the composing a syllogism or solving a problem in Euclid:—when this is the case how mortified must be the assiduous, the tender parent!

The just ideas my Son has imbibed of duty to his friends, to himself, to his country, and his God, will, I trust, ever prevent giving pain. I have laid my account high with regard to my children, and if disappointed the shock will be in proportion to the height I have soared.—

I am much grieved at the wound given to the honour of Harvard by a man who, had his moral character been unimpeachable, did not fill his important station with dignity. A deviation from virtue would not have a more fatal influence from an example in any department than from one placed at the head of a seminary of youth. Yet I cannot but hope that though it may countenance the licentious, it will give the more thoughtful youth the utmost detestation of vice when they behold in so striking a light the infamy that attends it. If the gentleman who now officiates[1] could consistently with health and the many other duties of his valuable and important life continue to preside there, it would redound much to the honour of the Academy and to the advantage of the rising generation; but if he refuse may there be one found whose abilities and erudition united with rectitude of heart and such a degree of politeness and purity of manners as will make him an ornament to the seat of science.

When I shall see you is uncertain, perhaps in a few days, perhaps not for months, but in greater or lesser disappointments you must learn equanimity, nor suffer yourself ever to be greatly elated or depressed; in such a world as this our own actions, only are the result of our wills; the events

which follow are in the will of a higher power, where they are cheerfully left by your
Affectionate mother
M Warren

MWP1

1. Note in Letterbook draft reads, "The learned and excellent Dr. J° Winthrop." This note and the paragraph to which it refers suggest another date for this letter, much earlier than 1776. In December 1773, Harvard president Samuel Locke suddenly resigned when he revealed he had fathered an illegitimate child. John Winthrop served as interim president until the appointment of Samuel Langdon in 1774. If that in fact is the event to which MOW refers, then either this version of a 1776 letter has been augmented by paragraphs from other, earlier letters or the Letterbook date is inaccurate and should be December 1773 or January 1774.

30 TO JAMES WARREN

[In early 1776, with the patriot headquarters at Watertown, Massachusetts, James Warren served as Paymaster General for the Continental Army. After the patriots put Boston under siege, the British departed in March. JW resigned the paymaster post in April, but in May was appointed as a major general of the Massachusetts Militia. With the British forces reassembling for an assault on New York, JW, still ill from a smallpox inoculation, faced the possibility of being ordered to command Massachusetts forces on a campaign to New York. He did not end up going to New York, but this letter and events around it reveal a pattern in the lives of the Warrens: Mercy's fears for her husband's safety and absence and James's reluctance to hold offices or public positions when they did not suit him.]

Sunday [September] 15 [1776]

How earnestly did I Ever Intreat my Dear mr Warren not to accept of an Appointment which my Intruding[?] Head Intimates would Involve me in the Depths of Distress. With my Eyes now swimming in tears do I Recollect How many Honorable, how many profitable & how many useful

which follow are in the will of a higher power, where they are cheerfully left by your
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1. Note in Letterbook draft reads, "The learned and excellent Dr. J° Winthrop." This note and the paragraph to which it refers suggest another date for this letter, much earlier than 1776. In December 1773, Harvard president Samuel Locke suddenly resigned when he revealed he had fathered an illegitimate child. John Winthrop served as interim president until the appointment of Samuel Langdon in 1774. If that in fact is the event to which MOW refers, then either this version of a 1776 letter has been augmented by paragraphs from other, earlier letters or the Letterbook date is inaccurate and should be December 1773 or January 1774.

30 TO JAMES WARREN

[In early 1776, with the patriot headquarters at Watertown, Massachusetts, James Warren served as Paymaster General for the Continental Army. After the patriots put Boston under siege, the British departed in March. JW resigned the paymaster post in April, but in May was appointed as a major general of the Massachusetts Militia. With the British forces reassembling for an assault on New York, JW, still ill from a smallpox inoculation, faced the possibility of being ordered to command Massachusetts forces on a campaign to New York. He did not end up going to New York, but this letter and events around it reveal a pattern in the lives of the Warrens: Mercy's fears for her husband's safety and absence and James's reluctance to hold offices or public positions when they did not suit him.]

Sunday [September] 15 [1776]

How earnestly did I Ever Intreat my Dear mr Warren not to accept of an Appointment which my Intruding[?] Head Intimates would Involve me in the Depths of Distress. With my Eyes now swimming in tears do I Recollect How many Honorable, how many profitable & how many useful

Employments you have Refused & accepted of this one which when Ever it was Named was as a Dagger in my Bosom. But I will not Reproach you. You feel Enough. Enough for your self & Enough for me. For if you march to N york In your feeble state I do not imagine you can have much Expectation of Returning. You Can Never Endure a Winters Campaign. If the sword should spare, I must [??] with you & take my Lodgment in the Neighbourhood of the Camp. I hardly know what I write. Is it Fate? No. I must not call it by that Name. No, it is providence which has destined me this affliction too much for my fortitude[?] too much for my strength. Yet Heaven Can support under the keenest sorrows[?]. But I feel at present as if I should sink only under the Weight of my fears.

Sunday Evening 10 clock.

The above wrote in my first Agitation of Mind after Gill brought me the Report that you had thoughts of taking the Command of the troops Destined for N york. It was just before Dinner—I could not Eat, I could not go Even to the House of public Worship in the afternoon. I Retired to my Chamber & after a few tears & a Little Reflection I almost perswauded myself of the Improbability of your Leaving this province. Under all Circumstances your [??] & Capacity in the Legislative will do more service to your Country in that Department than your Military Abilities can. As in the Camp[?] did your Health permit I have no doubt of your being Distinguished in Either.

I hope for a Letter tomorrow & thereby to know your Determination. I will Endeavour to Learn submission to the Designation of Heaven, but when Contrary to my Wishes oh! How involuntary the Resignation. I have been in fine spirits ever since my Return from Boston & had Resolved to be chearful in Compliance with your Requests in spite of a thousand [??] accidents to which we are Liable. But I fear there is an End to my Resolution.

Monday Evening

This Morning Received yours by mr Goodwin which has not only Relieved my mind but Given me pleasure. I am always Happy when the time draws Nigh for your Return to your very Affectionate

Mercy Warren

Coll Freeman[?][1] has Called on me for this so must not Detain Him.

MWP2, RC

1. Colonel Nathaniel Freeman headed a Continental Army regiment from Barnstable, Massachusetts, the Otis hometown, and may be the person referred to here.

31 TO JAMES WARREN

[With a smallpox epidemic threatening Plymouth, MOW had her sons inoculated. This letter provides an interesting glimpse into the convalescence of her children.]

Plimouth 24 Nov 1776

The Letter my dear Mr Warren will[?] Receive to-morrow I almost wish I had not wrote. I own I was a Little too Low spirited but my mind was oppressed & I Wanted to unbosom. It is this Evening No Less free from care though I feel a Little Differently. I was Ready to think the task of Governing & Regulating my Children alone almost too much—I now am forced to shove[?] hard to keep out the gloomy apprehension that the Burden may soon be lessend in some painful way.

I have been this afternoon at the Hospital where I left your [??] youngest sons. Poor Children—it was not possible to make them willing to give up the project. They thought it a mighty priviledge to be *Innoculated*. I Wish nor they nor we may have Reason to Regret it but I Cannot. [??] quake at Ease[?]. I Want to Discourage Winslow from going in yet am affraid. Their accomodations are not altogether to my Liking nor are their Nurses sufficient but they talk of getting More & better. But if my dear Children should be very Ill I must go & take charge of them myself, Inconvenient as it is. 48 persons were Innoculated this afternoon & Near as many will offer to morrow. I think it is too many for one Class. But there they are—& it is as Easey for the Great phisitian of soul & Body to Lend Healing Mercy to the Multitude as to the few—& if He Brings them Back in safty to their several Habitations I hope we[?] shall Adore the Hand that Heals & give glory to the Rock of our salvation.

Wensday 24 of Nov. your house Looks Lonely but Deserted in a manner you can hardly conceive—but twice as fair [??] will soon Run away & if my family should then be Retrieved in safty to my own Roof I shall be thankful. Indeed Winslow went off & was Innoculated this afternoon; it was so stormy I could not go with him but was yesterday at the Hospital. Found

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Harry & George had kept possession of one of the best cabins in the house which I had chosen for them & are taken into the same mess with some[?] of our steadiest men such as Deacon Torry Coll. Watson [??] the Capt. Capt. [*sic*] Harlow &c.[1]

Charles I put into the next Room & Winslow in the next to that thinking it best to separate them Least one should assume too much athority over the other & yet to have them within Call so as to assist Each other upon occasion. They Looked exceedingly happy when I first went among[?] them: but Charles took the first opportunity to wisper me too know if there was no such thing as stoping the small pox now for the opperation of his own physick [??] the Disturbance that other people gave him had Made him quite sick of the Vicage.[2] They followed me from Room to Room while I [??]. I was about[?] [??] off the soft heart of the Amiable Little harry melted & the tears fell in Copious showers from his Eyes while the big drops sweled the Lids & the Warm Blood Redned the Cheek & Every [??] Discovered his silent Wishes (Though the Gravity of the Creature[?] was Little Discomposed in your sagatious George). I sent them up a supper of Weak[?] Chocolate. A high Regale it was to all who tasted having been kept starving [??] all the time [??] not so[?] much from principle as a want of [??]—not having time or[?] [??] Enough to make proper provission for Near an hundred patients but they are geting into good Regulations [at] last, but I think they are too much crouded. I intend to Visit them tomorrow & then believe I shall not go in again unless My Children should be so Ill as to Need my Constant Assistance. Jemmy[3] thinks of going to Boston on saturday or Monday & then if you are not at home it will not be a very chearful home[?] with me though shall Endeavour not to be dispirited. I hope for your Company when you come till your Children shall be in a way to Return to their affectionate Mother & your

M Warren

MWP2, RC

1. Possibly Nathaniel Torrey, along with George Watson and Nathaniel Harlow Jr., all of Plymouth.

2. Possibly meaning "vicarage."

3. JW2; as indicated by an earlier MOW letter, he may have been inoculated while at Harvard and therefore would be the only son fit to travel.

32 TO JAMES WARREN

[By December 1776, things looked bleak for American patriots. Routed from New York City and Long Island by an overwhelming British force, the Continental Army under George Washington retreated from New York altogether and headed south through New Jersey. As MOW fears in the following letter, the careless American general Charles Lee had been captured by the British at a tavern in Basking Ridge, New Jersey, on December 13, but unknown to her as she wrote was that Washington on the night of December 25 had scored a surprising victory over the Hessian troops (German mercenaries in the employ of the British) at Trenton. Word of that American victory reached the Warrens a few days later.]

Plimouth Dec^br^ 26 [1776]

My Dearest Friend,

This Morning before breakfast had the painful tidings that the Brave General Lee had fallen into the Enemys hands. You will judge of my feelings by your care[?] on this occasion. I understand the French[?] Gentleman who was taken with him is the same you so much admired for his Martial appearance when at Boston. The political Clouds at the southward with this Gathering Blackness towards the North With the stormy[?] appearance of the Natural world at this season[?] has an effect upon my spirits. Timidity, Vexation, Grief & Resentment Alternately Rise in my disturbed Bosom yet I struggle to Resume[?] that Dignity of Character that philosophic & Religious Resignation you so often Recommend till I feel the Courage of an Heroine & the Intrepidity of a Roman Matron. But I am also[?] disolved into Weakness When I recollect that the Dissolution of the [??] may be at hand, that Every social joy is at stake & that I may be left a Naked helpless Vine without the Cedar or the Branches to Defend me from the Rude storms bent on the American shores. To fly thence[?] to the Last & the best Resource of the afflicted soul & Look up to my Maker & Benefactor for the Continuance of the blessings this providence has Lent or to prepare me for the Resumtion.

I think it was Rather Injudicious in General Lee to Venture to Lodge at a Lone house in a Village where he knew the adjacent country was so

Remarkable for their Disaffection to the Common Cause.[1] I am Informed by mr Thomas[2] that he had sent off most of his Guard with his baggage an hour before he[?] being Detained by a Letter from General Gates Relative to the Rout he was about to take. He had Collected about 2000 Militia in Morice County where he was siezed with which he Intended to Attack the Enemy in the Rear. He had just finished an answer to Gates[3] when the Centry Cryed, "the *English Light Horse*" in which he had only time to Rise & step to the window before the house was surrounded. They fired a Number of Carbines into the Windows of the room he was in & Endeavoured to force their way into the house but were prevented by the Gentleman within for about half an hour when the General saw from his window they were hacking his gaurds to pieces & were about to set fire to the house on which he opened the door & succeeded[?] asking if they were about to behave as Assassins, on which they replyd that they knew him well & should treat him as a Gentleman but he could not obtain Leave to Return & take his hat & cloak. The officer telling him he knew his Character too well to suffer him a moment out of his sight & with the greatest[?] acclamations of Joy they mounted him on one of their horses And rode of in triumph shouting Loudly that their Fortunes were made.[4] Thus far my Informer. I am so Apprehensive of the Cruel Strategies & Inveterate Malice of the torys that I should not think it safe for any man of Eminence to Entrust himself Alone within twenty miles of the enemies army in this part of the Country & it is astonishing how much more [??] those people are in the Jerseys philadelphia &c. It is unsafe Even for a private man to travel & Difficult for any Expresses to pass. The shops are kept shut in the city of philadelphia & Multitudes have been removed to[?] Lancaster about 30[?] miles from the City. Our army is not dispirited though very small & little union among the officers. Adjutant General Reed[5] is universally hated & the N England officers despised, more Especially the Militia, the Regulars themselves acknowledging a Great difference between the behavior of Continental troops & Militia. Every thing confirms me in the opinion that there is no dependence on Militia. It is generally believed at the southward that Burgoyn is dead & that the Report of Howes[6] being wounded is true for he is not with army nor is he to be seen anywhere.

I suppose you know the speaker of the Road Island house of Assembly has made his submission.[7] I Cannot say I wish to see the Massachusetts disgraced by a similar Conduct as theirs.

There are many things which Look Like the frowns of providence against us & when we Consider the wikedness[?] of the people we cannot wonder if we should feel severely the Chastisments of Heaven. Yet the Cause in which we are engaged is Certainly just & if heeded[?] would probably be productive of Virtue[,] Religion And morallity through a Considerable part of the Globe.

Don't you think I am discouraged or depressd when I write my thoughts so truly[?] & fully. No[?] I seem to feel this day & Evening amidst a thousand gloomy Annecdots as if our God was about to Bring a deliverance by means which we cannot foresee. The less we have to hope from man the stronger is my confidence in Him who presideth over the Earth And will be Glorifyd in his doings & many times when we are Ready to say with peter Lord help for we are sinking then is His arm streched out to save.[8]
[no signature]

MWP2, RC

1. MOW is being charitable with "injudicious," based on her hope at the time that Lee would bring badly needed professionalism to the Continental Army. The British-born and British-trained Lee turned out to be one of the major disappointments among American commanders. His reputation, already sullied by his easy capture at Basking Ridge in 1776, would undergo further degradation with the Battle of Monmouth in 1778. After his release in a prisoner exchange, he made it known that he should have been made commander in chief of the Continental Army rather than George Washington. At Monmouth, as the British were fleeing, Washington ordered Lee to attack the enemy; believing his troops were significantly outnumbered, he ignored Washington's orders and retreated. He was court-martialed and found guilty, and he left the army in disgrace.

2. Possibly she means John Thomas, who played a key role in the siege of Boston. See headnote to L 23.

3. General Horatio Gates of the Continental Army.

4. One of those captors of Lee allegedly celebrating was Banastre Tarleton, who would soon become one of the most successful and notoriously ruthless British officers in the invading army.

5. Joseph Reed of Philadelphia. Reed resigned his post at the end of the year.

6. Neither rumor about British generals John Burgoyne (1722–92) or Sir William Howe (1719–1814) proved true.

7. Event unclear. The speaker of the Rhode Island Assembly in November 1776 was Metcalfe Bowler, who was replaced that same month by William Greene.

8. Perhaps referring to Matthew 14:30, when Peter, walking on water, begins to sink and calls to Jesus for help.

33 TO CATHARINE SAWBRIDGE MACAULAY

Plymouth February 1st 177[7][1]

An opportunity presenting by a Gentleman in whose honour I can confide, to convey solely to your hand, I again take up the pen. I have no doubt you are still glad to hear from your American correspondents, though all freedom of intercourse is now cut off;—cut off not only by Royal Proclamation, but necessarily impeded by the hostile movements between Great Britain and a country which has been long used to look over to her with warm affection as a friend, protector, and parent. That period is now past, the connexion is broken, and the American Continent feels these convulsions which have been experienced by every country ere they have obtained the permanent establishment of the rights too frequently wrested from them by the strong hand of power.

Mankind have ever been so prone to yield implicit obedience to that authority to which they have long been accustomed that there are few examples of resistance, unless the ill timed exercise or wanton abuse of power has rendered it necessary to resist that arbitrary spirit which too often gains ground till the social state becomes more miserable than the rude ages of uncultivated nature. When this is the case the feelings of the man and the patriot are awakened and both the peasant and the statesman are urged to struggle even in *blood* to secure themselves and to posterity the claims they derive from heaven. When the scymitar[2] is drawn from such principles as these, life and fortune are a feather in the balance against the chains of servitude, which have long clanked in the disgusted ear of America.

Not the purple of Princes, nor the splendor of a diadem, can sanction the deeds of cruelty that have already been perpetrated on these western shores;—perpetrated by men whose crimes emblasoned by title, will hand them down with redoubled infamy when the tragic tale shall be faithfully transmitted to Generations yet unborn.

How long before the sword that has spread devastation through some of our distressed cities will be resheathed, is an event enwrapped in the

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How long before the sword that has spread devastation through some of our distressed cities will be resheathed, is an event enwrapped in the

womb of futurity;—but this will, I venture to say with confidence, that no suffering which ministerial vengeance can inflict (aided by their barbarous allies from other European courts) will reduce America to submission and dependence on a foreign power who has already added insult to injury;—instead of listning to the groans of the oppressed, and to the tears of anguish, they have wrung out the blood of the innocent and crimsoned over the feilds which have often teemed[?] for the nourishment of Britain.

You will not madam expect from me a long detail of military operations, I shall therefore only observe that the campaign of one thousand seven hundred and seventy six will contribute little to the honour either of the arms or the humanity of the ministerial troops.

It requires the pen of a Macaulay to have the origin, to paint the prime actors, and give the true colouring to the source and prosecution of a war kindled by avarice, whetted by ambition, and blown up into a thirst of revenge by repeated disappointments.

The name of Howe[3] once revered in America is now held in general detestation for undertaking a project reproachful to human nature, and in derision for the manner of executing a plan that would reflect disgrace on the conductors, even if attended with success. But this hope must be at a distance from the British commander;—if this country is ever conquered, the victors will only be masters of a depopulated soil;—the thunder of their artillery may lay waste the cities but the spirit of the people is unconquerable; the land may be deluged in blood and every village stained with the purple tide, but Death is preferred to thraldom by almost every individual, and dreadful indeed will be the conflict if the poignard[4] is pushed by despair.

Notwithstanding some advantages gained by a concurrence of circumstances, which will never again take place, the two brothers Lord and Sir William Howe are driven back to the post where they began their depredations. Every species of rapine and outrage has marked the footsteps of the British army in the Jerseys; the inhumanity exercised toward the prisoners who have fallen into the hands of our enemies is beyond a parallel among civilized nations. The mercenaries apprized by head who will drain the coffers of the British exchequer when the [??] price is paid for the lives of thousands that have and will fall in the inglorious contest do not appear to be more cruelly disposed than their employers.

But it gives pleasure to every upright mind when we heed[?] there[?] are yet some individuals in an Island once famed for generosity and virtue, who are not dead to those noble sentiments which formerly distinguished their ancestors, the subjects of the Crown of Britain from the slaves of the petty Princes of Germany. Nor is it unexpected to see the Brother of my worthy friend among that number; and when we see Mr Sawbridge[5] in the minority boldly standing up in defense of personal liberty, we are pleased that he acts a part so much to the honour of himself and his connexions.

May some favourable opportunity present whereby you may convey a line to us; the bearer of this Mr. T——s proposes after a few weeks residence in England to return to America, if he should, you may safely write to your obliged friend,
& Humble Servt
M Warren

MWP1

1. The Letterbook version is dated 1776, but a later hand has crossed it out and written 1777, which seems the more logical date. See reference in the following letter, dated February 15, 1777, to CSM that mentions letter of "fifteen days ago."

2. A scimitar is a sabre with a curved blade.

3. Footnote in Letterbook draft reads, "Sir William Howe accepted the command to subjugate the Colonies." At the time, Howe was commander over all British military forces in the colonies.

4. A long dagger.

5. John Sawbridge, Macaulay's brother, was also a political radical. As mentioned in an earlier note, he had been a member of Parliament, but through false accusations was removed from office and, like Catharine, came to oppose the abuses of arbritary power.

34 TO CATHARINE SAWBRIDGE MACAULAY

Plymouth February 15th 1777

I wrote you, my dear madam, fifteen days since by an American Gentleman bound to England; but as the circumstances of the times render every conveyance uncertain except what are cloathed with Royal authority, I again resume the pen. The very critical situation of this country, the interesting events which are daily taking place, which command every passion of the

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human soul in this quarter of the Globe and are big with consequences that awaken the curiosity and may excite the astonishment of the European world—cannot be indifferent to a lady ever attentive to the happiness of society. I am therefore pursuaded your candour and friendship will render them acceptable if every letter finds its way as directed.

It cannot be denied that the conduct of the British ministry and the movements of their fleets and armies, through several years that they have been distressing the loyal subjects of the Crown of England, and the faithful friends of the Hanoverian line, has been matter of speculation in the cabinets of Princes, and a hopeful presage in rival courts of the downfall of the haughty mistress of the Isles. But the formidable preparation of the last year have filled every American bosom with alternate hope, fear, and anxious expectations.

It was late in the season before Lord Howe[1] in the American seas with his motley mercenaries from the German States.

It was thought by some that the name of such ferocious auxiliaries would half complete the conquest of the infant Colonies: but they were unmindful that *they* had long been used to contend with the Savages of the desert, though not with their inhuman brethren of Britain.

His lordship was soon joined by Sir Peter Parker, who had been repulsed at South Carolina, by Lord Dunmore, who had been driven from Virginia, and by most of the King's troops in America, except those in the northern department. The post of Quebec commanded by General Carlton, had been gallantly defended by that experienced officer against the brave and unfortunate Montgomery, who fell there at the close of the year one thousand, seven hundred, and seventy five. General Burgoyne had repaired to that quarter with the design to head the troops over the Lakes and make a junction at Albany with the forces of General Howe when they had subdued the more southern colonies. But the feats of their campaign will not be recorded in the archives of fame, though by an extraordinary exertion they obtained a fleet in the wilderness superior to the little American Squadron on the lake Champlain which they easily destroyed. After which they precipitately retired while General Gates who commanded at Ticonderoga had every reason to expect they would rapidly advance with great advantages on their side. Where those renowned officers are now; I am unable to tell you; some say General Carleton is making great preparations for an early inroad in the spring;[2]—but whether General Burgoyne is gone

home for fresh orders or whether retired into the recesses of literature writing a second Farce[3] is yet[?] uncertain.[4]

The arrival of Lord Howe the last summer was immediately announced to [??] government and accompanied with pompous declarations of his pacific powers: that he was come with a gracious commission from his Royal master to accommodate the differences and to restore tranquility to America thus amidst the pride and pomp of war was held up a delusive hope of peace: but the proposals that followed were deemed affrontive to the understanding of the people: an insult to the United States and a degradation of the high authority under which his lordship acted. It appeared that he was vested with no powers but to offer a pardon to those who held themselves guiltless, and with no conciliatory commission except a leave of private audience with Gentlemen in private capacity. Yet Congress condescended to this political trifling and deputed the venerable Dr Franklin, your friend Mr John Adams and Mr Rutledge[5] of South Carolina to meet his lordship on Staten Island. They soon found he had no plan of accommodation, nor any proposals of amity, but a demand of absolute submission.

The difficulty of executing this extraordinary commission, manifestly embarrassed his lordship; he chattered without perspicuity or decision for three or four hours: while the circumlocutions of a ministerial policy were discoverable through the constrained sociality, though a facetious appearance was kept up untill both parties grew tired, and wished decently to withdraw: and after a short regale on *Cold beef and Claret*, they took leave of each other, civilly indeed though the one was more thoroughly disgusted with the futile and wicked counsels of Britain and the other, more convinced by the interview, of the determined spirit of America, and the ability of the men with whom she had entrusted[?] the security of her rights.

The first step of importance, often the union of the British force, was the making themselves masters of Long Island where the American had encamped; this they did with great ease though the stand was manly and the retreat masterly. As this Island commanded New York, General Washington thought proper immediately to evacuate the City and retire about fifteen miles. A few days after General Howe had taken possession of the City of New York: he marched with the main body of his army and crossing East river attempted to surround the Americans. General Washington resolved to [??] in flank with the enemy, suddenly decamped from fort

Washington a Garrison well provided with every thing necessary for defense: and leaving a small detachment at Kingsbridge he moved towards the White Plains. Here an action commenced attended with considerable slaughter. It is supposed that in this and several other skirmishes which soon followed in the neighborhood of New York, not less than four or five thousand British and Hessian troops were killed and taken prisoners.

By a stroke of Generalship not expected where little superiority in military skill had yet been discovered, affairs took an almost decided complexion. General Howe had ordered his tents to be struck and a movement of the whole army to be made towards New York. As the season was far advanced, it was supposed he was going into winter quarters, instead of which he took advantage of the present situation, attacked and carried fort Washington, which it is said was to have been evacuated the next day, the whole garrison consisting of upwards of two thousand men were made Prisoners of war. These unhappy wretches were stripped of their common apparel, not withstanding the inclemency of the season, and with other prisoners were thrown into the gaols of New York, where they suffered the extremes of misery, from hunger, cold, and nakedness. But they are lately dismissed, most of them to the world of spirits,—the remainder are sent on parole (after being infected with the small pox) to visit their friends, and to convince their countrymen that to die in the field of battle, is infinitely preferable to the treatment they may expect to receive from a nation once distinguished for the virtues of clemency and justice. Sir William Howe pursued his advantage, took possession of fort Lee, pushed forward with rapidity, overrun the state of New Jersey and had reason to expect he might reach and surprize Philadelphia, before Washington could be reinforced.

The acquisition of Long Island and the easy progress of the King's troops through several states must be very pleasing intelligence to the ear of administration, and when backed with the account that they had reached even to the borders of the Delaware, doubtless the fond hope of speedy conquest and subjugation danced in the Royal bosom and played in unison in the imagination of a corrupt majority in the house of Commons.

But those who are acquainted with the situation and character, the genius and connexions of the inhabitants of the middle colonies, may form different ideas. It is well known that from the beginning of the present contest the lamp of liberty has not burnt so high in New York, New Jersey,

and Pensylvania, as in other parts of America. There are many in New York who have not been proof against the influence of ministerial gold. New Jersey has been the [??] of the timid, the disaffected, and the lovers of inglorious ease from one corner of America: they there thought they should be secure from the ravages of war. Thus while human nature has been disgraced by every outrage, the distress has principally fallen upon that State, which contains by far a greater number attached to the British system than could have been found in any other part of America.

The quakers and proprietary interest in Pensylvania have ever hung as a dead weight on the spirited measures of the true friends of freedom. But the peculiar mode of raising and recruiting the Continental army in every state has retarded the operations of war more than all these circumstances, and in some measure tends to defeat the best concerted plans. The several colonies have furnished their quota of men for a limited time and this country, unused to standing armies, and the control of military power, and actuated by a strong sense of the liberty of the individual, each one has retired at the expiration of his term in spite of every danger that threatened the whole. This has occasioned frequent calls on the Militia in aid of the army, who, being raised and sent forward only for a few months at a time have kept it in a fluctuating state.

Apprized of these circumstances and acquainted with the steps taken by Congress to remedy the evil in future, General Howe at the close of the campaign, when the Continental troops were drawing off, embraced the favourable opportunity, and so vigorously pushed Washington with his handful of men, that he was obliged to retreat from town to town across the state of New Jersey, and even over the Delaware, which he had time to cross only five hours before the main body of the British army appear'd on the opposite bank. This retreat has been thought rather necessary than disgraceful: yet judge my dear madam, what must be the feelings of a man of acknowledged valour and humanity find himself thus unable to repulse an enemy whose footsteps were every where marked with wanton barbarity. Even the sacred repositories of the dead were not unmolested: and the beautiful maid whose cheek had withered in the tomb, was dragged from the silent asylum by the sacrilegious hand of the soldiery, while the licentiousness of their officers spread rape, misery, and despair, indiscriminately through every village. Yet there were some individuals among the

latter, who endeavored to check the insolence of triumph obtained without victory and unbalanced either by the principles of religion, honour, or humanity.

In the course of this pursuit the general concern has been enhanced by the sudden capture of an officer of distinguished rank and valour. *Lee*,[6] now next in command to General Washington, had been collecting a body of Militia in order to fall on the rear of the enemy; had injudiciously taken a lodging at a small village about twenty miles from the British encampment, and within three or four of his own. He was betrayed, surprized, and taken prisoner by a party of light horse, and not suffered to take either hat or cloack, was mounted hastily on one of their steeds and hurried in a ruffian like manner to the headquarters of his foe;—where he is now kept in strict confinement, and threatened with military execution, as a deserting officer from the service of the King of England.

General Washington has made an offer of five Hessian field officers and a Colonel Campbell belonging to an Highland regiment in exchange for General Lee. The offer has been rejected;—since which the whole of them have been ordered by Congress into close confinement, and General Howe is advertised that their blood must atone for the life of *General Lee*, if he falls a sacrifice to the malice of his enemies. Humanity weeps the sufferings of individuals who by the law of retaliation are adjudged the legal victims of policy.

Are you Madam acquainted with the character of Gen. Lee? he appears to me sensible, learned, judicious, and at times agreeable; he is allowed to be firm, penetrating, sagacious and brave;—he is a man of an unconquerable spirit, a warm, indefatigable friend of America, but I think more from an unshaken love of freedom and an impartial regard to the inherent rights of man, than from any attachment to particular persons or countries; this misfortune has given rise to some temporary suspicions: we hope the triumph of our enemies will only be the exultations of a day. The new year has opened in a reversive[?] view. Some particulars I shall give you on the morrow if the bearer should be detained a day or two longer. I am Madam with every sentiment of esteem, yours
M Warren

MWP1

1. Lord Richard Howe, the British naval commander and brother of Sir William Howe.

2. MOW runs through a number of recent military encounters of the war. Parker (1721–1811), commander of a British naval squadron, had been sent as reinforcement for loyalists attacking the southern colonies but was repulsed by an American land force at Fort Moultrie, South Carolina, in June 1776. John Murray, 4th Earl of Dunmore (1730–1809), onetime royal governor of New York and later (1771–76) royal governor of Virginia, had departed that latter colony by ship on January 1, 1776, burning Norfolk in his wake. General Sir Guy Carlton (1724–1808) was commandant at Quebec City, where General Richard Montgomery was defeated at the end of 1775. British control of Lake Champlain had been contested by Benedict Arnold and a small, ragtag fleet of American gunboats. General John Burgoyne moved north as part of the campaign to destroy the American army in a pincers movement from Canada and New York—a strategy that backfired in October 1777 with the British defeat at Saratoga.

3. Note in Letterbook draft reads, "While shut up in Boston the preceding winter Burgoyne entertained the town with a farce of his own composing entitled the [?] Blockade of Boston for the entertainment of the ladies of the city." This refers to the staging of a play, written by General Burgoyne, by the British military in occupied Boston, home of the antitheatrical Puritans. During the performance of the play, the Americans began to fire on the city as part of their siege, word of which, when announced on stage by one of the costumed performers, the audience at first thought to be part of the show.

4. The text is somewhat confusing because the last words of the paragraph appear to be incorporated into MOW's note; this is probably a transcription error by JW2.

5. Edward Rutledge (1749–1800) was governor of South Carolina.

6. See headnote to L 32 regarding General Charles Lee's capture at Basking Ridge.

35 TO CATHARINE SAWBRIDGE MACAULAY

Plymouth February 15th 1777[1]

My Dear Madam,

I have mentioned in a preceding letter that Sir William Howe had returned to New York, and that the year had opened with better prospects to the Colonies.

A spirited measure of General Washington has had a very happy effect. With the remnants of his army, consisting of about two thousand men, he on the evening of the twenty fifth of December, crossed the Delaware,

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surprized a regiment of Hessians stationed at Trenton, took twelve hundred prisoners, and recrossed the river the same night, with little or no loss. Within a few days after he gained some signal advantages at Princeton, at Elizabeth Town, and several other places on the Jersey side of the river, where the British army, elated by success, and anticipating conquests, lay carelessly cantoned in small divisions.

The Americans animated by the late fortunate stroke, gathered strength as they moved, and in their turn, pursued the King's troops with as much rapidity as they had fled before them: while those veterans, as if seized with a general panic, made but a feeble resistance. They have collected their strength at Brunswick, and it is supposed they will soon retire to New York there to wait, until the humane [??] of Britain obtains foreign mercenaries sufficient to aid his own subjects in the butchery of their American brethren.

Congress are taking measures for the establishment of a permanent army: they have ordered eighty battalions and two legions of cavalry to be raised and kept in full pay to the conclusion of the war.

The approaching Spring appears big with the fate of empires, and the wheels of revolution move in swift progression: they may smite the diadem from the brow and shake some tyrant from his throne before he is aware. The flatterers of *majesty* may be more attended to than the prophetic voice that augurs evil: yet when the *Mene Tekel*[2] is inscribed on the walls of the palace, it cannot be blotted out by the hand of the prince *who humbles not himself though he sees the work that has been done in the days of his fathers.*

We have been precipitated into a conflict that will probably light half Europe in flames; and we must ascribe it to him; who sits at the helm of the universe, that America has not fallen at the threshold of resistance. She has had innumerable difficulties to surmount. She has had her government to erect, her civil justice to regulate[,] her armies to establish and funds to provide for their payment. She has had new sources of trade to strike out: alliances to form, and a navy to begin. She has had her magazines to supply with the nitre shed from heaven and the ore dug from the bowels of the earth, while the thunder of Britain was alarming her coasts; and the troops of George the third holding the sword at her throat, with the execrable purpose of erasing the last vestige of freedom.

But I trust we shall not always struggle alone against the powers of Europe: when war was denounced and every nation called upon to aid Great Britain either by the loan of auxiliaries or by engagements to refuse all military supplies to the oppressed colonies, the powers of invention and industry were called forth. The manufacturing of saltpetre which was considered by some as the ideal project of the enthusiast for freedom, is now become here the easy occupation of women and children.[3] The state of Massachusetts alone, has within a few months, furnished more that an hundred tons: powder mills have been erected, which have worked with success;—this country abounds with sulphur, lead, and Iron ore;—thus nature has furnished the continent with materials, and Providence has led to independence before her Children were conscious of their maturity.

The rapid increase from the first settlement of America has been remarkable: and the productions of genius since the dispute with the parent state, will evince to the world that science has kept pace with her population. The vigour of her abilities are summoned to the test; she feels her own strength, and every hand that is not in arms is employed in arts, with an alacrity that shows a determination to be free. Her negotiations abroad have succeeded: her trade will revive and the American marine may in time make a respectable figure among the nations.

We long turned our eyes toward the people of England justly expecting they would arouse in a cause so friendly to the general liberty of mankind;—but we now cease to indulge either hope or fear from the disposition of Britain: and pity the few generous and liberal minded men who have defended our cause that they are confined to an Island where the exercise of their patriotic abilities are lost.

The Continental Congress now set at Baltimore, where they do business with more unanimity and dispatch than they could at Philadelphia while the city was in confusion and only the river separated them from the British army.

A detachment of British and Hessians under the command of Lord Percy[4] took possession of Newport and the adjacent islands without opposition in the beginning of winter. If any part of America is held by our foreign enemies it must be the Islands: yet we hope the vicissitudes of war[?] may break up those insular nests before the vernal swarms hover on our coasts[?].

It is said little harmony subsists between the British and the foreign troops: the Hessians complain that they are always made the forlorn hope and the disgust has lately risen to mutiny in some instances. The unexpected kindness that has been shown to the prisoners by a people from whom they had been led to expect no quarter, has occasioned murmurings to the service among the German auxiliaries. They seem to wish rather to be settlers than assassins in this fertile Country.

I am desired to add to [??] the warmest wishes of my worthy partner for your health and happiness. Mr Warren's unwearied attention in the service of his country calls him much from his family: in his absence my most pleasing employ in the hour of solitude is a correspondence with some very valuable friends and I should be ashamed of my taste if Mrs Macaulay did not stand one of the first on the list: yet lest she should suffer any inconvenience from a real or suspected correspondence with a *rebel lady*, I shall suspend any attempt for further intercourse until hostilities cease and peace again shews her welcome face on both sides the Atlantic. Meantime I shall make every possible enquiry after your welfare, nor will you forget your affectionate friend and humble servant,[5]
M Warren

MWP1

1. Letterbook draft notes this letter is "in continuation" of a previous letter of the same date.

2. The original "handwriting is on the wall" from Daniel 5:25.

3. Saltpeter (potassium nitrate) was an essential ingredient in the gunpowder of the day, along with sulphur and charcoal. In June 1776, JA as the head of the newly organized Board of War had called for the building up of military stores, including saltpeter, sulphur, and so forth.

4. Percy had been successful in the early years of the war, but he became increasingly disgruntled with Howe's handling of the British forces and resigned his command in 1777.

5. Note in Letterbook draft reads, "Several paragraphs in the two preceding letters were afterwards transcribed by the author into her annals of the American Revolution." MOW seems to have begun taking notes as early as 1775 for a projected history of the war. As the note correctly states, she used portions of letters, notably this one to Macaulay, in her later complete history. See Jeffrey H. Richards, *Mercy Otis Warren* (New York: Twayne, 1995), 133–34.

36 TO JAMES WARREN

[Although the war was still in its early stages, MOW began to sour on the town where she lived. Despite her fervent belief in republican government and virtue, she observed in Plymouth instead what she thought was an unwarranted tolerance of Tories in their midst, including the Winslow family, and the taste for luxury goods at a time when conditions demanded self-imposed privation for the good of the war effort. This disgust with her neighbors emerged as one of her main themes for the next two decades, "party Resentment." Meanwhile, JW was in Boston, having just been elected Speaker of the Massachusetts House.]

[Plymouth, June 14, 1777]

According to the plan agreed on I set out on Tuesday & arrived at my own house in safety a little before five. Found all well & in good order that it doubled my regret for hastening home so long before you. It is but a gloomy place without you. There are few places I have seen that I should not prefer to plimouth were it not the interest of the best of Husbands to reside there but when he is absent I find nothing to Attach me to the place; a people Defective both in Literacy & polite Education & soured by the Bitterness of party Resentment cannot be very agreeable to one of my social temper. But one would think the obligations they are under to a man spending both time & fortune in their service would dictate to them that it was but a piece of common Civility to step in & and congratulate his wife on her return after a Long absence but neither man woman nor child has pd you that Compliment Except one who [??] was at the door when I returnd. But I have so small an opinion of the Friendships of the World & such a sense of the ingratitude of man that it is a matter of great indifference with me whether I am in the city or the Villa provided I have the Company of that man of whose Friendship I have had more than twenty years Experience & without whom Life has few Charms for me.

My ardent prayer is that you may succeed in your Earnest Endeavours to be instrumental in the Salvation of your Country & preserve it from that Yoke of Bondage prepared for it, but if the Efforts of the Virtuous now fail I think the Conflict must Cease & however mortifying we must yeald to the arm of Lawless power rendered sucessful by the pusalinimity of some

& the Luxury & Avirice of others. You can after a ten years ineffectual struggle quit the Walk of public Life & return with the Consolations of a peaceful Conscience & the possesion of a Mind untainted by the corrupt influence of Avarice or Ambition.

Since the above was wrote I have seen several people who are anxious for your welfare & wonder at my Leaving you & if you are not Likely to be home soon [??] shall be with you again. Capt Samson saild on Saturday. I have not heard but all is well at the farm.[1]

I shall write again soon in the mean time subscribe yours affectionatly
M Warren
June 14 77

MWP2, RC?

1. The farm at Clifford, the Warren estate outside of Plymouth proper. During the winter, the Warrens lived on North Street in town. The "Capt Samson" she mentions may be Captain Simeon Sampson of Plymouth County, brother of Jonathan Sampson and uncle to Deborah Sampson, the woman who disguised herself as a man and served in the American army as a soldier at the end of the war.

37 TO JANET LIVINGSTON MONTGOMERY

Plymouth, November 25, 1777[1]

The depredations made in the State of New York and the confusion into which that City has been thrown the Summer past, with the uncertain residence of its distressed inhabitants must be my apology for postponing to acknowledge the receipt of your very agreeable favour of March last. Though compassion and sympathy were the first motives which led to a correspondence, I should be greatly wanting to myself, was I to neglect the culture of an acquaintance which promises both pleasure and improvement.

The sensibility of soul, the pathos of grief so strongly marked in your letters, have convinced me that the brave Montgomery had a partner worthy of his character. The plaintive periods are wrote with that elegance of *style*, that graceful diction which excites in me the warmest wishes to continue the intercourse begun with a stranger, till it should deserve the sacred appellation of friendship.

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The dignity of sentiment discovered in the parting expressions of the first friend of your heart, is a testimonial of his merit, and he who enters the field of glory with such resolutions will obtain a triumph, whether victory or death, crowns the generous effort. You doubtless, madam, must have been witness in the course of a few months to the tears of many weeping the fondest connexions cut in sunder by the unrelenting sword, whetted by rapacity and imbittered by disappointment. I imagine the noise and tumult of war must have reached even to your door, and broken in upon the soft mourner, in the private recesses of sorrow;—often must the wounds have been open afresh in your bosom while your tender and agitated mind sighed for the lover, the friend, and the husband to support you under the scenes of approaching desolation and distress. A regard to the public weal quickens the regret, that the hero was not spared to repel the invader.

What complicated ruin does the mad ambition of mortals bring upon the innocent!—what wide spread misery do we see rushing in upon millions from the love of gold and the lust of domination in a few!

Thus while the crimson current stains the cities of America, and every village groans beneath the oppression of her ancient parent, the sceptre of Britain quivers, and Empire seems about to depart from an ungrateful dissipated Nation and to transfer her seal to the western world. But all Europe will feel the convulsion and agonize for her slaughtered sons.

May that being who sets bounds to the proud billows of the ocean prevent the tide of human blood which threatens to deluge this generation. And may you, my dear madam, continue to look calmly forward to the completion of that inscrutable plan of providence which often permits the sufferings of the virtuous and lends prosperity to the vile. Then may you meet in the regions of felicity, the good, the worthy, and the brave, from whom a temporary separation seems the privation of all happiness.

You will make a return of my best compliments to your good mother and family:—when I wrote you before, I was ignorant of the recent affliction which at once wounded her peace and redoubled your griefs. I knew not that the tomb of an affectionate Father was bedewed with the tears that trickled o'er the cheek of his amiable daughter, who will permit me in future to take a share in the infelicities she may feel;—or if more bright

and joyous days should be allotted to Mrs. Montgomery before the *tale* of life is wound up it will give unfeigned pleasure to her affectionate
Humble Servt.
M. Warren

MWP1

1. Aside from capitalization practice, this Letterbook version differs only very slightly from the RC in the Princeton University Library.

38 TO JAMES WARREN

[December 30, 1777]

This Extream Cold season Gives me great Concern for you who can so Illy brave the severity of Winter more Especially from your own fire side where it is the study of Every one to Make you happy. Oh these painful abscences. Ten Thousand anxieties Invade my Bosom on your account & some times hold my Lids Waking Many hours of the Cold & Lonely Night. But after a day or two has succeeded such a Restless Night & No Ill tidings arrive my Restless Bosom is again hushed into peace & I can calmly hope the same providential Care which has hitherto protected will still preserve your Valuable Life; yet when I reflect how many years have Rolled over our heads we have Little Reason to Expect many more should be Added to the Tale.

Will you aid me to improve the Remainder to Better purpose than the [??] yet I have aimed to keep[?] in my sight for the Good of society. I have Endeavoured unweariedly to Implant[?] the purest principles of Morallity & Virtue in the Minds of my Children but Heaven alone must Mature the seed & make it productive of such Fruits as we Wish to see in our sons. There I Leave them; if they Walk in the paths of Honour And Truth to God alone be the praise. If they are Carried away by the Torrent of passion & the Evil Example of a Corrupt World yet still I will Adore that being who if my Earthly hopes are Cut short is able to give me a Name better than that of sons or Daughters.

How did you Get Through on saterday? It was very Rainy hear. I had a very sick day then but am now as usual.

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You will see by the package with this that I have Endeavourd to Discharge all Demands in the Literary way. I send some of them unsealed for want of Wafers.

I write this in hopes some Vessel will go to Morrow by whom you will not fail to send[?] a Little Briad[1] to your Ever Affectionate
Marcia Warren

Dec 30 10 oclock p m

I this Moment hear by Wing[?][2] that the British troops are Embarked for a Winter Expedition & that Dartmouth is much Alarmed. Wherever they go may their Evil designs be Defeated & may Every Movment Hasten that peace which my soul Longs for.

MWP2, RC

1. By "briad" she may mean "braid," a commodity not easily available in wartime, or possibly "bread."

2. The Wing family had settled in Sandwich, Massachusetts, on Cape Cod, in the early seventeenth century and had been in the area for several generations. We do not know the precise person to whom she refers.

39 TO JAMES WARREN

Plimouth March 10 1778

My dearest friend I am not out of spirits. Your Harry[?] says I am not—& there is nothing he observes more or more ardently wishes than to support the spirits of his mamah. I hope this fillial principle in him will ever coincide with the virtuous dispotition [??] has bestowed to prevent his deviation from that line of conduct which can alone make him happy.

But we have here the most disagreeable reports—faith, fortitude and courage are necessary to bear us up amidst the train of public evils even if the body was in health & the mind free from [??] domestic anxiety—War is like to thicken up as—Conspiring at Cambridge, Fasting[?]at Boston—[??] which it is said some very unexpected names appear though we do not yet learn who—

Burgoyns troops supplyed with arms—our own army without cloaths, without provissions & without tents—many of them deserting to the

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Plimouth March 10 1778

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But we have here the most disagreeable reports—faith, fortitude and courage are necessary to bear us up amidst the train of public evils even if the body was in health & the mind free from [??] domestic anxiety—War is like to thicken up as—Conspiring at Cambridge, Fasting[?]at Boston—[??] which it is said some very unexpected names appear though we do not yet learn who—

Burgoyns troops supplyed with arms—our own army without cloaths, without provissions & without tents—many of them deserting to the

enemy & others on the border of mutiny—General Washington under suspicions—about to be dismissed or to retire in disgust—The toast among the soldiers Washington or no army—and to compleat the picture the General Court laying on taxes and making regulations that the people are determined not to comply with—Yet I do not feel greatly terrified by these dismal accounts. We often see the Clouds gather blackness and when big with the lowring storm they are suddenly dispersed by that almighty hand who sits at the helm and suffers no Ill to befall his creatures but when necessary to promote the mighty designs of his providence—that providence has hitherto protected us—I strike out three fourths of the gloomy tale—only the vague [??] of the day & reverse the scene and view America finally triumphant though innumerable difficulty may rise up in her way—

We have two British transports now in this harbour. A number of our people went on board yesterday and returned mightily pleased with the civility and the presents they received—What a weakness—how easily are mankind duped by each other without either true Confidence or Esteem—

I have been better this day than any one since you left me. I know you pity me under this sorry Confinement. Were you to look in upon me & in your way "Come *up Spirits*" and then paint some agreeable [??], I know nothing that would have so ready a tendency to restore health: that Cheerful voice has always a very happy effect on your
Marcia

MWP2, RC

40 TO JAMES WARREN

[Although JW had taken an active role in Massachusetts politics since his early days as sheriff, by 1778 he found himself at odds with a number of other, more naturally political people, including John Hancock. This letter reflects not only MOW's judgment on her husband's enemies but also the peculiar (if to some extent understandable) ambivalence of the Warrens to public service, especially given MOW's supremely republican principles.]

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Plimouth June 2d 1778

You my Dearest Friend, who have so often heard me Express my opinion of the Folly, Fickleness, And Ingratitude of Mankind will not wonder when I tell you I am not at all surprized to see them forsake a Man who for many years has at the expense of his own Health, Fortune, and Happiness uniformly labored[?] to promote their Interest, but I own I did not Expect to see your town so suddenly Deviate from the principles they formerly professed. I Never supposed that in the midst of the contest & at the most Critical period [??] they would suffer the Inveterate Enemies of their[?] Country[?] to lift up their heads & openly oppose the Measures & Malign the Men who have suffered so much in the public cause, yet strange as it may appear One of the Most publike Emissaries of Britain, And the most Malignant of your foes[1] was suffered Yesterday in full Meeting of the town to Stand up & Cast the most Illiberal Reflections on a Man whose primary object has been to Reform[?] this people from the Thraldom of a foreign yoke & to secure Their Rights against the Machinations of the more Dangerous Enemies that Lurk in their own Bosom. With this sole point in View, how much fatigue & painful Watching have you sustained—& from your abscence & sufferings how much anxiety have I felt & how many tears has it Cost me. But you are now Released by the suffrages of the people & stand aquited to your God, your Country, & your Conscience if you Never Engage again.[2] I feel the highest pleasure from the knowledge of your Integrity & the Certainty I have that the Voice of Popularity was never a stimulous to any one action of your Life. You have justly despised the Breath of the Vulgar, & Looked with Contempt on those selfish Wretches who Lie in Wait for the Applause of the Multitude & Court Adulation from Every servile Lip.

How often has the young gentleman who is the Bearer of this agreed with me in Sentiment that the Reward of patriotism was not in this World & as he is just seting out in the Craggy path of political strife, May he Conduct so as to Reap the Laurels due to unblemished Virtue.

But some say he has Entered at the wrong End of the Dangerous [??]. Yet I Cannot believe him so Lost to the Noble feelings of Friendship & Honour as to unite with the Enemies of his Country to undermine a Man I know he Cannot but Esteem, And who from personal Regard & a generous Confidence in his professions of Whigism has Long considered Mr. I Thomas[3] in the Light of a Friend—

You will perhaps think me a little chagrined at the Late Conduct of your townsmen, but it is not hightend. I have Long felt so much Indignation & disgust for the Ingratitude & Baseness of your Constituants (a very few Excepted) that I could scarce bear the Reflection that you were sacrificing the best comforts of Life, your Domestic Felicity, to support the Interests of those who Stand Ready to Repay your Indefatigable Labour with undeserved Execration.

I will not Indulge the hope that your Duty will not urge you in future to be much seperated from your family, that we may thereby sit down in private tranquility till Nature makes the Last Demand.

> "When Conscience Like a faithful Friend.
> shall smooth the Bed of Death."[4]

I propose to go to Barnstable on Thursday, shall spend 4 days with my Father, And when I Return it will be in full Expectation of Meeting you in a day or two more. In Addition to my Wishes to see you & my purpose of Returning with you I have still another Weighty Reason for urging your Return Next week as proposed. The meeting of this town for Raising their Quota of men by Assessment stands Adjourned to Next Monday sevenight. You will then have an opportunity once more to Exert your abilities in [??] of the Wisest Measures—& if you think proper to thank people for the *Late Marks of Respect* shewn to a truly Disinterested Friend of his Country.

Do you hear nothing from the Boston Frigate?[5] If Mr. Adams falls into the Hands of Foreign Enemies he is to be pityed but less than those traduced by Internal foes in the presence of Friends who have not Spirit Enough to Resent it.

Don't you admire the Late Address of Congress—but it is not the same people they addressed three years ago so that I fear it will have but Little Effect.

I hope to hear from you soon & be assured Notwithstanding the Caprice of Woman, the Instability of Man, & Every Deformity in which human Nature is Exhibited in Modern times, you will Ever have a Faithful Friend in your affectionate
Marcia

MWP2, RC

1. A footnote to the Letterbook draft reads, "foe Winslow the Elder," i.e., Edward Winslow Sr. (1714–83 or 84) of Plymouth, a powerful Tory who eventually left the town for New York, then moved with other loyalist refugees to Halifax, where he died.

2. In May 1778 JW had been unseated as Speaker of the Massachusetts House through the machinations of John Hancock, with whom JW remained at odds for the remainder of Hancock's political life.

3. She may refer to Isaiah Thomas (1749–1831), the publisher of *Massachusetts Spy* and a fellow Whig.

4. From Nathaniel Cotton, "The Fire-Side," *A Collection of Poems*, ed. Robert Dodsley (London: J. Hughs, 1763), 4:254). The full passage reads,

> "While Conscience, like a faithful friend,
> Shall thro' the gloomy vale attend,
> And cheer our dying breath;
> Shall, when all other comforts cease,
> Like a kind angel whisper peace,
> And smooth the bed of death."

5. In February 1778, JA sailed for France on the *Boston*, a Continental Navy frigate captained by Samuel Tucker, for Bordeaux, France, to help secure the terms for the new Franco-American alliance. See *AFC* 2: 389.

41 TO JOHN ADAMS

Plymouth December 16th 1778

I cannot but think I must have been a sufferer by the many captures of American navigation, for as I take you to be a gentleman of the strictest veracity, I must suppose that the watery damsels who attend the ouzy beard of the grey-headed Neptune are much more fortunate than the woodland dames of America. Otherwise notwithstanding the busy and important scenes in which you are engaged a folio from the Court of France would 'eer this have reached Braintree, and one small octavo at least have found its way to Plymouth. But if by thus frequently letting down[1] the most weighty secrets of state, as well as the communications of the friendly heart, the dark councels of the Deities below do not gain an influence sufficient to embarrass your negotiations, we can more easily forgive the peculation of the *Neriads*,[2] as we may suppose the females beneath have some

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curiosity, as well as those who walk upon the surface of a world where knowledge is circumscribed within such narrow limits that the sex are too often forbid to taste the golden fruit.

But perhaps you may have forgotten amidst the multiplicity of avocation and the magnitude of objects, that you are under engagements to make observations for the use of more than one lady on the western side of the Atlantic. But that lady has furnished me with a written obligation signed by yourself—that the first safe conveyance some communication and *remarks should be forwarded to M^rs^ Warren.*

I have still a further demand upon you—I claim it as my right, doubtless you will accede to the validity of the claim, when you recollect that six years ago, by the Plymouth fire side, where many political plans originated, and were discussed and digested you observed in a moment of despondency that it was your opinion *that dispute between Great Britain and America would not be settled, until your sons, and my sons, were able to visit and negotiate with the different European Courts.* A lady replied, though perhaps not from prescience, but from presentiment or presumption, that you must do it yourselves:—that the work must be done immediately, and that she expected from you in the intervals of business,—a pleasing narration of the different customs, manners, genius, taste and policy of nations, with whom we were yet little acquainted. You a[ssen]ted a compliance, if the prediction took place. You have been absent near one year and nothing of the kind has arrived.

You must remember Sir, that when we are descending a precipice, the velocity is much more rapid than when we mount, though hope points to the summit, and expectation spreads her wing to accelerate the motion. Thus time in advance is beheld with rapture by youth, while age looks back with regret on the past;—and if you postpone your communications by the year I cannot expect to receive many;—for if no premature stroke precipitates the moment, this inconsiderable globe cannot often revolve round the centre of the system, before I hope to tread the starry pavement, and look down with pity, on the regalia of Princes, the pomp of Royalty, the empires of a day, and even on the pride of republican or aristocratic grandeur.

I wrote you a long letter which went in a packet forwarded by the Count de Estaing.[3] That was void of poetic fiction or any flights of fancy, but it

contained many solemn truths,—which if the packet arrived safe were doubtless corroborated by abler hands.

I write you now in a solitary hour. Mr Warren is yet at the head of the Navy Board, exerting all the powers of a good head and an excellent heart, to put the affairs of the American Marine on a respectable footing, as far as falls within his department. We have hitherto been unsuccessful at sea the causes shall leave for others to investigate.

Mrs Adams will doubtless write you by this opportunity. She has lately made me an agreeable visit. I often call on her in my way to the Capital, whither I repair whenever I can leave my little family which now consists of only my two youngest sons in the parlour:—the elder ones being of an age proper to leave the parental roof to qualify for wider scenes of action. I dare say you remember them all: if you do not, I shall soon have a young person with me, who you will never forget—Miss Adams is to spend the winter with me.[4]

There are certain seasons, in the lives of the greatest philosophers, and politicians, when the mind is releived, and gathers fresh vigor from trivial interruptions accidentally thrown in his way. This reflection often quiets the whisperer within, when admonished thereby for breaking in on the important moments of a gentleman, whose time is not his own: and if you sometimes unbend your mind by writing to a person very avaricious of every attainable means of improvement, in this scanty portion of existence, I do not think the public would be essentially injured thereby.

This is to go by Captain Landais of the Alliance, with whom I have a son.[5] I took up my pen intending but a few lines more than to let you know, notwithstanding the vicissitudes of time, the fluctuation of events, and the convulsions of nations, there are yet a few, a very few of those you most esteemed in the days of tranquility, who still remain invariably the same, in the face of danger and difficulty. Nor can I lay it down, till I inform you that both you and your country, have lost an invaluable friend in the death of Colonel Otis of Barnstable,—whose memory will be long respected by all who had the happiness of his acquaintance.[6] He had long and patiently waited to be called from his post—but did not bid adieu to mortality until the ninth of November one thousand seven hundred and seventy eight when he paid this last debt of nature:—Both public and private virtue wept a deceased patron, and while they pay this just tribute of applause and gratitude over the manes of the patriot, the tears of affection will long

flow over the tomb of an excellent father, from the lids of his daughter, your unfeigned friend
M Warren

MWP1

1. Note in Letterbook draft reads, "During the war all packages were sunk in case of capture."
2. The Nereids in Greek mythology are fifty sea nymphs (sisters) who accompany Poseidon and aid sailors during storms. MOW had evoked them in a poem she had written for JA, "The Squabble of the Sea Nymphs," which appears in *Poems, Dramatic and Miscellaneous*, (Boston: I. Thomas and E. T. Andrews, 1790), 202–5.
3. Charles Hector, comte d'Estaing (1729–94), French naval commander who failed in his attempt to fight the British at Newport, Rhode Island, in November 1778, and then left the mainland for the Antilles before returning to France in late 1779.
4. Abigail "Nabby" Adams (1765–1813), the daughter of Abigail and John, who stayed several months in Plymouth with MOW in early 1779.
5. JW2, the son to whom MOW refers, served as a lieutenant of Marines aboard the American ship *Alliance*, captained by the French naval officer Pierre Landais. In January 1779, the *Alliance* sailed for France, arriving in Brest after capturing two British ships. The ship saw further action, as later notes will indicate.
6. MOW's father, James Otis Sr., who died November 9, 1778.

42 TO ABIGAIL SMITH ADAMS

Plimouth March 14th 1779

If anything could awake the sleeping muses, or call back the wandring Deity, the Imagery of this delightful Morn, when the hand of nature has decorated everything with spangles of peculiar brilliancy, while the rising sun displays a calm, majestic brightness which gladdens the whole, and gives additional lustre to the whiteness of the new fallen snow:—This glorious prospect, backed with the request of my friend, might break their nap[1]—But the subject you point out may require Heroics—while [??] Clio is deaf—perhaps irrecoverably stunned untill the noise of war shall cease—

The harmony of Caliope suffers by the jarring of patriots—and Melpomene is starved amidst the general cry for bread. In short, I believe the sacred nine,[2] sickned by the unpromising aspect of the decayed village of

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Plimouth (once the Asylum of virtue): and grown weary of this old friend, forsaken, they had sometimes made a lodgment in an unthrifty soil, have bid an everlasting adieu to their former votaries.

As their ladyships have taken wing, probably in pursuit of some more happy soil, I hope they will not rest till they alight in the head of some happy[3] genius whose prostrations[?] will do honour to the admired train, as well as to the cold regions of the North. If they should ever again make a temporary visit to one too much secluded from society, which brightens the Ideas, and gives a polish to Expression, depend upon it your request will not be forgotten.—But at present you must be content to let me tell you in plain prose—that I think your absent partner an Honest man;—and that if by living in foreign countrys amidst the refinements of courts, of statesmen and polititians, his integrity should be undermined, his taste perverted, or his principles corrupted, my motto in future to almost every public character shall be, "That man is all a lye."

I return you a letter with thanks for the perusal—you will also by your daughter receive a manuscript which you will return soon.—I really love your little Girl & love her the more, the longer she resides with me.—[4]

You ask me what is my opinion relative to the late disputes among the higher powers of America, and what are my expectations with regard to the ensuing campaign—to the first I must reply. I know little about it except what is contained in the public papers,—There I think may be discovered the precipitation and the timidity of guilt in a certain indiferent writer—but it is not unusual in the infancy of states for some of the most unworthy characters to jostle themselves by fortunate accidents into the most capital departments of office: and when by their atrocious conduct they have thrown everything into confusion, they make efforts to escape punishment and often impeach the most Worthy and cast an odium on the best concerted plans.—I think time must unravel some misteries which authority at present thinks best should be hushed in silence.

To your second question I answer, their is no calculating on the termination of military rencounters. Yet I do not fear much from the sword of Britain. I believe her to be more haughty than powerful and more malevolent than politic, and that she will endeavour to do much by intrigue.—

Heaven will restrain the arms and defeat the counsels of a corrupt court, but not for our sakes. The lord of the universe will disappoint the projects of our foes to carry on the system of his own Government:—and while he

protects will chastise us if necessary and will punish an ungrateful people in ways more analogous to the usual doings of providence, than to suffer a new formed Nation to be trodden down ere it arrives to maturity.

America is a theatre just erected—the Drama is here but begun—while the actors of the old World have run through every species of pride, luxury, venality, and vice.—Their characters will become less interesting and the western wilds, which for ages have been little known, may exhibit those striking traits of Wisdom and Grandure and magnificence which the Divine Oeconomist may have reserved to crown the closing scene. Yet——[5]

Adieu,
M. Warren[6]

MWP2, draft[7]

1. I.e., the nap of the sleeping muses.

2. The "sacred nine" are the ancient Greek Muses. Clio is the Muse of history; Calliope, of eloquence and poetic epic; Melpomene, of tragedy.

3. In this sentence, "soil" and "happy" are the original terms, but each is scored through with "fortunate" and "clime" inserted, possibly by another hand.

4. Nabby Adams, still visiting MOW in Plymouth. The *AFC* editors were not able to discover the manuscript by young Abigail indicated here.

5. Dash as it appears in ms.

6. Below the signature is written "Mrs. John Adams."

7. This letter exists in three versions: the RC printed in *AFC* 3: 189–91, a transcribed draft in the Letterbook, and this one—quite possibly the first draft and therefore the closest to MOW's original intentions.

43 TO JANET LIVINGSTON MONTGOMERY

Plymouth March 18th 1779

"*Affliction is the good man's shining scene.*"[1]

Though I am persuaded Mrs. Montgomery rendered herself amiable in the sunshine of prosperity and in the brightest smiles of pleasure by her engaging affability endeared herself to her connexions, yet is not that character heightened by adversity, when from its mournful accents it

protects will chastise us if necessary and will punish an ungrateful people in ways more analogous to the usual doings of providence, than to suffer a new formed Nation to be trodden down ere it arrives to maturity.

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makes itself not only esteemed, but really beloved by those who have not the happy opportunity of a personal acquaintance?

I feel myself so tenderly touched with the epithets of sorrow which fall from your descriptive pen, that I am at a loss whether I ought to call up another sigh from a benevolent heart by communicating any part of my own. Yet as you still drop the filial tear over the tomb of a deceased parent, let me tell you the day your last favour was dated, the heart of your distant friend beat in unison of agony with the dying pangs of an excellent Father[2];—in his public transactions the patriotic character was conspicuous, and in his private life the social and domestic virtues mourn the loss of an exemplary friend.

Nor have I yet a mother from whose lips flowed the instructive precept. Ever ready to draw from the pure fountain of Religion, arguments sufficient to console a rational mind under the adverse strokes of a momentary existence: that blessed Saint bade adieu to mortality some years since, after consigning three most amiable Daughters in the bloom of life, & in the meridian of usefulness.[3] You my dear madam, can still listen to the soft voice of maternal tenderness, and the smiling sister will not suffer you to weep: while a dead silence now reigns in the mansion of my youthful days where fraternal love once glistened in every eye and heightened the joys of innocence.

Thus Madam[?] before I was aware have I precluded the necessity of any future apology for the plaintiveness of your pen, by laying open the wounds in my own bosom, nor shall I ask an excuse for dwelling on the domestic tale, but still continue it long enough to thank heaven I have yet a friend, the partner of my felicities, and the support of my pensive hours. Methinks on the comparison I hear a gently reproving voice, complain not ungrateful woman, so long as such a companion is lent to smooth the thorns in the part of private life and to bear you above the billows that break on the public stage.

I stand admonished—and bid a Truce to my tears;—but will readily accompany the widowed hand to spread over the Cypress and pour a plentiful shower into the Urn of a Montgomery. It was needless, my dear madam, to remind me thereof;—the anniversary of that day when the hero fell *in the reins of* glory and thus insured the applause of his enemies will never be forgotten by his friends. I claim the honour of ranking in that list not

solely on account of the esteem I bear his lady, but as a lover of my country and an admirer of every character which does it honour by the exhibition of superior virtues.

But when the phantom of pleasure disappears and the big *sorrows* roll repeatedly over the disappointed mind, are we not too apt to forget that it is the condition of humanity to suffer;—that we hold our being on the tenure of submission, and that only by a suitable demeanor in this vestibula of existence shall we be intitled to a state of more permanent felicity.[4]

While the manly shade hovers around you and beckons you by the recollection of every past endearment, from a world replete with disappointment, I will seal up the lip of complaint, and cast my eye abroad on the thousands younger than myself, who must search the grave for their early associates and look into eternity for those friends who strewed the choicest flowers in the path of life.

I congratulate you madam that amidst the general devastation in your part of the country the cruel invader has not robbed you of an house of your own.[5] May no hostile hand again disturb you, and may a speedy period be put to the miseries of this country, among which the cry for bread in this state is none of the least: many families *otherwise*[6] affluent are reduced to the necessity of living many days at a time without any. Yet luxury lifts up her head in the capital and dissipation spreads successfully her silken wing, while the palm of rapacity is open to receive the gains of oppression;—yet heaven can releive when you nor I can do more than lift our feeble voices to that throne whence may every blessing be showered on the head of my amiable friend.

Your tender recommendations of a sister came to hand;—the single circumstance of her being your sister is sufficient to make me regret it has not yet been in my power to see Miss Livingston.[7] As I have reason to believe her possessed of many excellent qualities I should be wanting to myself if I neglected the earliest opportunity of cultivating an acquaintance with this young lady. But though Mr. Warrens public avocations confine him much to the Capital, and of consequence lead me very often thither, our usual residence is at Plymouth about forty miles from Boston where I should be happy to see Mrs. Montgomery or any of her connexions.

I propose as soon as the rigours of Winter are a little more softened to spend a few weeks in Boston, where I hope for the pleasure of seeing Miss

Livingston frequently in that social way, which cuts not off the delights of friendship by the incumbrance of ceremony.[8]
M Warren

MWP1

1. From one of MOW's favorite texts, Edward Young's *The Complaint, or Night-Thoughts on Life, Death and Immortality* (London: J. and F. Rivington, 1773), Night 9, here quoted with the following two lines: "*Affliction* is the Good Man's shining scene; / *Prosperity* conceals his brightest Ray; / As *Night* to Stars, *Woe* lustre gives to Man" (p. 239).

2. Note in Letterbook draft reads, "The hon. James Otis Esqr of Barnstable."

3. This rare written comment by MOW on her mother, who died in 1767, contradicts Rosemarie Zagarri, who says MOW left nothing in writing about Mary Allyne Otis. See Zagarri, *A Woman's Dilemma: Mercy Otis Warren and the American Revolution* (Wheeling, Ill.: Harlan Davidson, 1995), 10. Zagarri correctly notes, however, that Warren says much more about her father than her mother (11). The "three most amiable Daughters" are MOW's younger sisters Mary Otis Gray (d. 1763), Eliza Otis (d. 1766), and Abigail Otis (d. 1766).

4. Although this version closely follows the original, the RC in the Princeton University Library includes at this point in the letter a slight misquotation from Edward Young, *Night-Thoughts*, Night 3: "Smitten friends are angels sent from Heaven / on Errands full of love." Young's version reads, "Smitten friends / are Angels sent on Errands full of Love" (p. 44).

5. Janet Montgomery had an estate along the Hudson River, a contested area for much of the war, but successfully avoided being the target of hostilities. The RC reads, "I congratulate you Madam that amidst the General Devastation in your part of the Country your seat has escaped the Conflagratory Fury of the Invader."

6. RC reads, "Otherways."

7. Catherine Livingston, Janet Montgomery's sister. This portion of the letter in the RC is dated March 24.

8. RC includes an additional paragraph regarding details of a letter from MOW to Montgomery that originally "Miscarried" but that MOW resends.

44 TO HANNAH FAYERWEATHER TOLMAN WINTHROP

Plymouth May 24th 1779

What a poor creature and, to take up my pen with a view of giving consolation to my afflicted friend, when I have so little fortitude, that I cannot suppress the rising tear, when the Partner of my cares has just left me with the hope of returning in a few days. Peace every restless thought, and hush in silence the involuntary sigh![1] Thankfully adore the hand that spares and trembles lest he deprive thee also of a blessing like to that which thy friend [??], and in the anguish of her soul almost refuses to be comforted!

If we could consider things more abstractedly, and rejoice in the felicity of those we love and wait for a participation of their happiness,—how quietly should we rest assured that the several designations of heaven, ever just, good, and perfect.

Yet social Beings, secluded from the converse of friendly minds, is an idea painful indeed and when in that friend we lose not only the pleasure of society, but the benefit of instruction and the lessons that lead to higher enjoyments, how tasteless is life, how dreary the world! Yet this may be the circumstance necessary to lead us off, and without this temporary separation, we might not be well prepared for more durable happiness.

I am so far from cultivating that system of Stoicism in which some glory. There is a tribute of tears due to the worthy, if we have the example of a compassionate Saviour weeping over the *Manes* of a Friend; and as through this Saviour we have assurance of the resurrection of the dead, Oh! That we could learn with him to say (however embittered) "the cup which my Father hath given me, shall I not drink!"[2]

If it was possible my dear Friend, I do not wish you to forget your loss, but moderate your grief. Let us consider the memorable and great name of our excellent Friend, as past beyond the short date of human life into the annals and veneration of Posterity. I cannot but look up to him now as a good and wise being, far above us, who casts an eye of pity on mortals, who as seeing only one part of their existence are ready to sink under calamities while the little part we survey bears a less proportion to the whole than an atom to a world.

You have a little more to do perhaps a little more to suffer e'er your kindred mind will be wafted to those airy regions which your philosophic and pious partner so often explored before he took possession. It is no wonder

that a soul should calmly quit its clay tenement, that had so frequently been in heaven, and surveyed the starry firmament, as but one of the astonishing works of its Creator.

I could say a thousand things of Dr Winthrop, yet the encomiums would be short of his character;—with pleasure I might long dwell on his virtues;—yet to one painful circumstances I must advert, which every one who esteemed him does not feel, that in him I have lost a *Friend*: "A Friend in purchase for a world is gain."—How many very valuable ones have we deposited in the darksome tomb!—Yet we cling to the world, and are sometimes ready to grasp it as an adequate portion for a rational Soul.

May you, may I my dear Madam, make a proper estimate of life through all its varieties. As we have risen superior to many others in the felicity of a happy connexion, and lived in a style of enjoyment to which the multitude are strangers, so must the reversive[?] scene be attended with proportionate poignancy, unless we can learn in season,

> "Till time appears a moment as it is—
> "And thus Eternity's full orb at once,
> "Turn on the Soul and strike it into Heaven"[3]

More[?] may we meet and meet those who beckoned us thither when they closed their eyes on mortality.

You will not forget my tender love to Lucretia and all due regard to the Sons of my venerated Friend.

When Mr Warren returns again to Boston, if well, I shall inform[?] him, after which I shall insist on a visit to your unalterable
& affect Friend
M Warren

MWP1

1. Hannah's husband, John Winthrop, died on May 3, 1779.

2. This paragraph is interesting given MOW's seemingly stoic stance in other letters. She differentiates from what she sees in Stoicism as an unemotional, even hardened response to life's vicissitudes, and a proper, condoling expression of sorrow or grief that she identifies as Christian.

3. From Edward Young, *The Complaint, or Night-Thoughts on Life, Death and Immortality* (London: J. and F. Rivington, 1773), Night 9, pp. 265–66:

Of worldly wishes. *Time, Eternity*!
('Tis these, mis-measured, ruin all Mankind:)
Set them before me; let me lay them Both
In equal Scale, and learn their various Weight.
Let *Time* appear a *Moment* as it *is*:
And let *Eternity's* full orb, at once,
Turn on my Soul, and strike it into Heaven.
When shall I see far more than charms me now?
Gaze on Creation's Model in *Thy* Breast
Unveil'd, nor wonder at the Transcript more?
When, This vile, foreign, Dust, which smothers All
That travel *Earth's* deep Vale, shall I shake off?

45 TO JOHN ADAMS

Plymouth July 29th 1779

Your vigilant and invariable friend Mr Warren, has just written you a long letter which makes it unnecessary for me to take up my pen;—nor should I do it at this time; but in compliance with his wish, whose partiality leads him to think it is in my power to contribute to the entertainment of a gentleman, who has from interest, from vanity, and from some more noble principles, such a multitude of correspondents.

Was it not for the many adverse accidents, which prevent a safe passage, you would have little cause to complain that you was forgotten on this side the Atlantic. Your head would be replete with intelligence, and your Cabinet crouded with epistolary lumber—among which when you have leisure to retrospect, you will find several letters unanswered, from a lady who claims a reply, both from politeness, and friendship. I will neither suspect the one, nor censure the other, till assured in some future paragraph that you have not time to answer letters, but when the interest of the public—or the indispensable duties of private life require it.

Certain I am, did all the political, military, and gubernatorial observations, which are designed for your perusal, reach the gardens of *Passy*,[1] you would be willing to unbend a little, by listning to the more familiar style of female composition. But, as many packets have been lost, through fear,

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misfortune, or *treachery*—I imagine an avidity is still kept up, and that you open every seal that comes to hand, with expectation and desire, to investigate the plans of the statesman, and to survey the martial operations of the heroes of your Country.

Nor is any one better qualified than yourself to penetrate the *arcane* of American politics. Yet you must be surprised at the inconsistency which appears in some characters. You must also be at a loss, if not at the stimulus which *provoked*, yet for the influence that could carry into execution *certain resolves*, painful to the best, and a rich repast to the worst men that disgrace your native land. But a spirit of party has entered into all our departments. The *Deanites*[2] that is to say the votaries to pleasure, men of *pretended* taste and refinement, make no inconsiderable figure,—while many others worship only at the shrine of *Pluto*.

Yet the old republicans, (a solitary few) with solemn dignity still persevere. Their hands unstained by bribes—though poverty stares them in the face,—and their hearts unshaken by fear amidst the dissipation, and folly;—the levity, luxury, and wickedness of the times.

I can only sigh with a celebrated writer "alas, for poor human nature, alas, the manners of my country!"[3] How much longer shall we probably be distressed and embarrassed by the insidious arts of courtiers, gamblers, and stockjobbers of American growth, while a merciless enemy is laying waste our borders, burning our Cities, and murdering the innocent of all ages and ranks?

Dark and inscrutable are the ways of providence:—yet only so to us short sighted mortals. I forbear to draw aside the curtain or indulge a wish to look forward to the blood stained field,—to the revolutions of goverment, the convulsions of nature, and the mighty shocks both in the moral, political, and natural world, that are yet to take place, and which are but a combination of incidents to compleat the peice,—which for ought we know may be the admiration and astonishment of wondering worlds, that revolve around this little ball, and may be taught by the *example* of man, to avoid every deviation from the center of perfection.

Here I cannot forbear to mention the renowned astronomer—and to mingle a tear of sympathy with you, and his philosophical friend D^{r} Franklin over the tombe of the excellent D^{r} Winthrop. The patriot, the philosopher, and the Christian so conspicuously marked his character, that

I fear it will be long before *Harvard* will see the chair of the Professor filled by a man of equal honour, dignity, and ability. Sure I am from my own feelings, his particular friends will never forget his virtues, though his country may grow cold to his memory; but his literary fame will live with the *Newtons* of every age.

It is but a few days since I called on a family at the foot of Penn's Hill[4] on my way from Boston. I found them well—and as happy as possible in the absence of a fond father and an affectionate husband; but the lady of the mansion will be more particular, who will write by this conveyance.

When you recieve this you will have so much reading before you from other hands, that I am convinced I ought to detain you no longer. I will only subscribe the name of your friend
M Warren

MWP1[5]

1. The suburb of Paris where Benjamin Franklin had established the headquarters of the American diplomatic mission to France.

2. Supporters and associates of the American diplomat Silas Deane.

3. It is unclear precisely what MOW refers to here, unless she means a loose translation of Cicero's "O tempora, O mores!"—O the times, O the manners of people. The letter contains no close quotation marks.

4. The Adams home in Braintree, Massachusetts.

5. This letter exists as an RC and is published in *WAL2*: 113–15.

46 TO WINSLOW WARREN

[In 1779, MOW's son Winslow was living in Boston, gaining, it seems, a reputation for pleasure seeking while ostensibly trying to establish himself in the trade business during wartime. Always her favorite son, WW brought on himself many admonitory letters from his mother, which represent a fascinating glimpse into a republican mother's conflicted desires to honor a son's independence while calling him to account on the republican score of virtue. In 1780, WW would set off for Europe, only to be captured by the British, as later letters and notes make clear.]

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Plymouth December 4th 1779

When a young gentleman first enters the more conspicuous stages of life and begins to tread the circle which circumscribes all the world can give, there are few things which are attended with more advantage than a just knowledge of the characters of those who court his acquaintance. Thus guarded, he may transact business with reputation, and toast the amusements adapted to his own age, untangled by the silken snares that have proved fatal to the virtue of thousands who started at the image of vice till grown familiar by imperceptible deviations:—deviations which he never would have slidden into but from a too intimate connexion with those, in whom genius may occasionally sparkle, though the attic[?] flame was never lighted in their bosoms; this must be kindled by an higher principle than that which animates the deistical caviller.[1]

As I write with the warm emotions of maternal tenderness, strengthened by the reciprocalitie of friendship and confidence (a light in which at a certain stage I wish to view my sons) I shall touch the outlines of the character of a person concerning whom you lately inquired; a character dangerous to society, more especially the younger part who are easily caught by the eternal appearance of affluence and the gaudy shew of wealth which raises a temporary esteem whatever guilt may be accumulated in the acquisition.

By the advantages of some early knowledge of the world he can adapt[?] his demeanor to the taste of different circles, and his manners are smoothed by an intimate connexion with a lady of delicacy. He has studied the belles lettres sufficiently to converse with ease, whether the subject is business, politics, or pleasure. Yet a bully without courage he challenges without design; and in the true spirit of chivalry advances in defence of a bubble blown up in his own imagination, to which he affixes the abused, prostituted name of *honour*.

But amidst an assemblage of vices, quick feelings, and great good nature, the love of gaming has the ascendancy over every other passion—and with paws extended as a beast of prey he sallies round in the nocturnal shade to catch the unwary and to mark the steps of young acquired wealth. While he smiles at his own success more from weakness than malignity, and makes use of every art to drag into the vortex of folly such as have not the sagacity to discover the mischief that lurks beneath, or the resolution to retreat till plunged in irretrievable ruin.

As your own good sense has led you to discern and your cooler judgment to resolve, I have little doubt of your persevering in your determination to avoid a too familiar association with some splendid characters whatever their fortune or rank may be; whose principles (if they have any) are a burlesque on reason, and whose practice is a disgrace to human nature.

Where-ever there is ingenuity of mind a diminution of chararacter is considered a greater evil than the loss of property, but often the sense of a wounded reputation harries the victim of caprice into such company as leads him to banish reflection:—when that is the case, the delinquent is lost. Reflection will often retrieve from error; but that distinguishing characteristic of the soul[?] [is] smothered in a thoughtless frivolity, the moral faculties daily grow weaker and the reasoning powers are absorbed in levities that exhaust the spirits and leave only dejection behind; thus he stands to the end of the drama among the blanks of nature neither useful or happy.

Yet I am sensible the warm passions and the impetuosity of youth may often hurry the active mind into excentricities, and that the most happy talents have been for a time obscured in pursuits which the more exalted feelings of the soul disdain;—and when he emerges from the accidental deviation, it serves as a beacon in the way admonishing the approach of the most fatal enemy to true felicity.

I hope to see you soon; meantime you will write to her who takes pleasure in contemplating as she descends the vale of life, that her children will smooth the declivity by those grateful assiduities which discover a disposition to oblige the most attentive and affectionate mother,
M Warren

MWP1

1. I.e., one who cavils, nitpicks.

47 TO WINSLOW WARREN

Plymouth December 1779

My dear Son,

I perceive by your last you are enraptured with Lord Chesterfield[1]—nor do I wonder at it. I should have no opinion of your taste if you was not charmed with the correct style, the elegant diction, the harmony of language, the thousand beauties of expression that run parallel with the knowledge of the world and arts of life through this compleat system of refinement. This masterly writer has furnished the present generation with a code of politeness which perhaps surpasses anything of the kind in the English language.

But when one sacrifices truth to convenience, probity to pleasure, virtue to the graces, generosity, gratitude and all the moral feelings to a momentary gratification we cannot but pity the *man* as much as we admire the author.—I never see this dangerous yet useful collection of letters taken up by the youthful reader but I tremble least the honeyed poison that lurks beneath the fairest flowers of fancy and rhetoric should leave a deeper tincture on the mind than even his documents for external decency and the outward semblance of morality.

I have no quarrel with the graces, I love the *Douceurs* of civility, the placid manners, La *Amiable*, and all the innocent arts of engaging the esteem and alluring the affections of mankind; the passion is laudable and may be indulged to any pitch not offensive in the eye of infinite rectitude. But I love better that frankness and sincerity which bespeaks a soul above dissimulation, that generous, resolute, manly fortitude that equally despises and resists the temptations to vice in the purlieus of the brothel[?] or the anti-chamber of the Princess, in the arms of the emaciated, distempered prostitute, or in the smiles of the painted courtezan who decorates her guilty charms even with the pretended blandishments of honour.

However, ennobled by birth, dignified by rank, or justly admired for his literary product, I must beg leave to differ from his Lordship, and think it by no means necessary that a gentleman in order to be initiated into the science of good breeding should drop his humanity; that to acquire a courtly mien and become an adept in politeness he should renounce the moral feelings; or to be master of the graces that his life should be a contrast to every precept of Christianity.

If this anxious father had sometimes omitted the consonant I and inculcated on his pupil of pleasure the necessity of a spark of grace in the heart (however exploded by *Les Beaux Esprit*) it might have produced a brighter and more lasting embellishment of manners in the person of his son than the *Gout Vif*[2] about which the careful parent is so solicitous.

The *Suaviter* in *Modo*, the *fortiter* in *Re*,[3] are much oftner produced by the emanations that flesh from a conscious moral principle, than by the finished turpitude of character held up under a flimsy veil of deception and urged on Mr Stanhope as the point of perfection. I am persuaded had the same brilliancy of thought and the many masterly strokes of genius been played off with a view to some higher motives of action;—had his Lordship paid more regard to purity of sentiment, and less to the efficacy of intrigue and gallantry, it might have corrected the errors of his raw traveller, and perhaps as soon have rubbed off the awkwardness inherent to his person, as all the studied rules, the laboured maxims, the machiavelian politics improved in the religious school of Voltaire, or supported by all the advocates for simulation and dissimulation that have lived since the Augustan age (when luxury was at the zenith) till the more perfect model of education exhibited by the noble Lord Chesterfield.

His Lordships severity on the ladies only reminds me of the fable of the Lion and the man, and I think such trite, hackneyed, vulgar, observations, such contempt poured upon so fair a part of the creation is as much beneath the resentment of a woman of education and reflection as it is derogatory to the candour and generosity of a writer of such acknowledged abilities and fame. I believe in this age of refinement and philosophy, few men indulge a peculiar asperity, disgust, or raillery at the sex in general, but such as have been unfortunate in their acquaintance, unsuccessful in their address or soured by disappointment. However practicable the connoisseur in the spirit of intrigue, might announce the conquest of the whole sex, it has been asserted by one of his biographers that he was never known to be successful in any of his gallantries, except that which brought Mr Stanhope into the world.

I ever considered human nature as the same in both sexes; nor perhaps the soul very differently modified by the vehicle in which it is placed.

The foibles, the passions, the vices, and the virtues appear to spring from the same source and under similar advantages, frequently reach the same degree of perfection, or sink to those stages of pravity[?] disgraceful to the

human form;—though custom in most countries has branded a licentiousness of manners in females with peculiar infamy—but we live in days *adroit* in the arts of removing every impediment to pleasure when the bars of rectitude are systematically reasoned down, and no other distinction is necessary but the happy art of concealment.

Though it may be deemed presumptuous to speak thus freely of so celebrated a work as Dormers advice; I shall venture to say I think it crouded with a repetition of the most trifling injunctions, replete with observations, rules, and precepts exceedingly advantageous for the conduct of young life, and stained with insinuations subversive of every moral and religious principle. The *utile*[4] is studiously blended with the vile[?] and in some of his letters one would be apt to mistake Lord Chesterfield for a saint was not his cloven step discovered by his precipitancy to procure an *arrangement* for his noviciate.

I am happy in having a son to whom I can disclose the full flow of sentiment, and the mixture of indignation that arises in the maternal bosom, when viewing such a specious digest of mischief to lead into error the most valuable part of society, the youth adorned with native grace and the rudiments of every excellence implanted in his heart.

I take you my dear son to be a reader capable of investigating truth, while charmed with the sweet numbers artfully arranged to disguise it, and though you admire the pointed wit, the polished address and melodious style you cannot be a proselyte to the principles of the modern Clodius.[5] It is the race of fops and fribbles, the half learned sceptic[?], the disciples of Hume and Bolingbroke,[6] who are the devotees of a man bold enough to avow himself the champion of every species of vice (only cloathing it decently) that would subserve the guilty pleasures of his accomplished debauchee.

Had I not made my letter so lengthy I would add an observation or two from the celebrated Mr Addison,[7] who did, more to improve the English language and correct the style of the age than any other man—was a just parallel run with regard to taste, manners, and even the graces (so far as they can be taught by letters) I believe Lord Chesterfield would drop in the comparison.

I expect the pleasure of seeing you here daily but if prevented you will remember you are in arrears and while you recollect that circumstance you

will not be so deficient in *Les* Bienseances[8] as to neglect a point of politeness to a lady, as well as duty to a most affectionate mother.
M Warren

MWP1

1. WW has no doubt recently obtained a copy of *Letters Written by the late Right Honorable Philip Dormer Stanhope, Earl of Chesterfield, to his Son, Philip Stanhope*, which had been reprinted in Boston in 1779. Celebrated for its prose style, Chesterfield's letters drew condemnation for their amorality; MOW rightly saw that a doctrine based on selfish pleasure would appeal to a son already leaning in that direction. A version of this letter by MOW appeared in the Boston *Independent Chronicle* on January 18, 1781, at the recommendation of AA. For a circulation history and the published letter, see Edmund M. Hayes, "Mercy Warren versus Lord Chesterfield, 1779," *WMQ* 40 (1983): 616–21

2. Chesterfield himself uses this French phrase to mean "a passion" for someone.

3. "Gentle in demeanor, resolute in deed."

4. I.e., useful.

5. Although there was a Roman emperor of this name, MOW probably means the Roman politician (c. 92–52 BCE) who turned against Cicero after the Cataline conspiracy, blatantly courted popular favor, and even dressed as a woman to enter women-only religious rites.

6. MOW maintained a lifelong critique of philosophical and religious skepticism, often mentioning Voltaire in that regard; here she targets the philosopher and historian David Hume (1711–76) and the political writer Henry St. John, Viscount Bolingbroke (1678–1751).

7. Joseph Addison (1672–1719), the English prose writer.

8. *Bienséance*, that which is fitting or proper in terms of etiquette.

48 TO JAMES WARREN

Plimouth Saterday Evening [January 1780?]

My Dearest Friend

I know not whether I have been most thankful for the Repeated protection you have Experienced through the Dangers & Fatigues of Inclement seasons or solicitously concerned Least you may have suffered by the severity of this Day. And could I be assured you are well & have not been much Exposed to the Violencies of the storm, I could be as happy as I ought to

will not be so deficient in *Les* Bienseances[8] as to neglect a point of politeness to a lady, as well as duty to a most affectionate mother.
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be when I cannot but feel for the Many who may be this Instant in the Greatest Hazard from the tempest, & in turn we have Reason to suppose it probable some of our Friends are upon this Rugged Coast.

In order to direct my own thoughts & to pass the Evening agreably to myself & profitably to my children I proposed before the candles were brought in that Each one should take a pen to write a Description of the storm in his own way. The project took & the attempt made & in about an hour Charles gave me a piece of Blank Verse at once Descriptive practical sentimental & Morose[?]. Henry sketched in prose, the Ideas flowed quick, but Henry wanted patience more than judgment for a proper arrangement. George attempted a Letter to mamah (who by the way Realised[?] the storm more than the poet or philosopher) but disliking his new compotition[1] he postponed till [??], & Betsey after thinking a few minutes complained to me as her young friend, that she was very cold by a good Fire & wished aunt would finish her letter.[2] But I Determine to go on with the Method & make them compose something Each day Either Discription or Naration, which shall be at least Good Grammar if it contains no stricking[3] Images. This will Habituate them to Ready Expression & in time give them an Easy, if they should not be capable of a Masterly style.

Sunday Evening. The weather extream. How can I but be anxious, greatly anxious, for the best of Friends, the most affectionate Husband. I shall be so till I am Happy Enough to see him again by his own fire side or at least to hear he is well & Happy.

Tuesday Morning. Still a dismal season, but are you well. If you are, I am not unhappy.

Write soon to your affectionate,

Marcia

Bread & flower[4]

MWP2, RC

1. I.e., composition.
2. Betsey may be her niece Elizabeth Otis, J02's daughter.
3. I.e., striking.
4. Perhaps a request for JW to secure these necessities.

49 TO JANET LIVINGSTON MONTGOMERY

Plymouth January 5th 1780

It was with real heartfelt pleasure, I received yours of the sixteenth November. I have thought the interval long since I had the satisfaction of hearing from one whose correspondence I prize, whose taste I admire, and whose person I love, however fanciful it may be deemed by some;—as distance has kept us from the interview that would yield peculiar delight. And though the present mode of existence may bar the intercourse for which the social bosom sighs, yet a friendship may be consolidated that may outlast the proudest monuments of time.

Yet I own myself disappointed that you did not repeat the flattering promise of an intended journey no[r]thward;—I have always been apprehensive that the excursion to Philadelphia would interrupt that plan, nor do I wonder at it, the inducements are small, the circle of amusements narrow, your connexions few, and the company in this quarter consonant to your style still fewer.

But if in future any thing should lead you this way, you may find in the decayed village of Plymouth (the early asylum of our ancestors) a retired family where competence without profusion reigns, where nothing is aimed at but a decent elegance devoid of show, and a capacity to open the arms of hospitality and bid the stranger welcome;—there you may be assured of finding one prepared to receive you with the warmest emotion of freindship. I rejoice that the late tour has had a tendency to dissipate some part of that cloud that sits heavy on a brow inured to reflect on [??] to those kind of recollections, where every pleasure pains us to the heart. But among the many you have seen who dwelt on the tale of woe and count up the tears of disappointment, how few ever reached those heights of sublime friendship early interrupted by the random shafts from the frozen walls of Quebec?

The heart once rived in sunder by the iron hand which blasts the fairest prospect of bliss (often before it is ripened for the harvest) cannot again be thouroughly healed; but the tear is ever ready to flow from the half closed wound, and running through a thousand sluices in pursuit of long lost peace, at last wearied with the fruitless search, the crystal current bursts from the eye and the weeping sufferer [??] not the rapial shower, till with her illumined face

"Religion teaches to sustain
"What nature bids us feel
"And piety relieves the pain
"Which time can never heal."[1]

And does my dear Mrs. Montgomery think it necessary to apologize to me for permitting to taste her pleasures, to participate her sorrows, and to enter into the various feelings which operate on a mind endeavouring to return the smile of civility, to repay the polite welcome at the board of hospitality and friendship with that air of cheerful gaiety which bespeaks a soul at ease, while at the same time every new object presents the pointed blade that harrowed up its peace?

Pard[?] I tell my excellent friend I will gladly accompany her (whenever she calls upon me) either to the sequestered apartments of silence and contemplation, or to the more brilliant roofs of splendour and festivity. In the one we may weep the short date of human felicity, and in the other we may smile while we pity the mistaken group who grasp the airy phantom, nor will be persuaded it is illusion till even the shadow of happiness, disappears.

But methinks I hear a conscious whisper "Is it kind thus frequently to look through the darkened glass at the vicissitudes of time, instead of holding the other end of the perspective to the eye of your friends?" I stand corrected and wish rather to lead her to survey a brighter landscape, interspersed with innumerable blessings and variegated with a thousand beauties, which when she has trodden o'er a little longer (though there may sometimes be a thorn in the way) she will reach the goal of ceaseless, perfect, permanent delight.

Do you madam expect your friend Mrs Jay[2] will correspond with you when she arrives in Europe, and has she the happy talent (shall I say like yourself) of depicturing the crouded scenes that must strike an observing eye in the vast field that will open before her? The pageantry of Courts, the levee of Princes, and the pomp of Royalty are exhibitions that have hitherto been quite out of the walks of American Ladies.

I should judge the stiff majesterial pride of Spanish manners, was a contrast to the ease, affability, good-humour, and simplicity which has been and I hope will long continue a distinguishing characteristick of the

women of this country:—I doubt whether in any respect Madrid is quite so agreeable a residence as Paris.

But as every age is productive of some original traits, some peculiarity of genius which marks the period, and not withstanding the variety of histories, voyages, and travels, with which the world is replete, there is still ample room for a descriptive pen to entertain its favoured correspondents in a way, useful, agreeable, and new. Some of the countries she may visit exhibit the grand of nature in its sublimest form, while others afford a rich display of the works of art improved for ages and beautified in the highest elegance of taste by the industrious hand of man;—but though the eye may be entertained, and delighted with the ornaments of life, the heart is seldom made better by a participation of its luxuries.

Some may suppose the entrance on such a theatre of events, not only eligible, but enviable;—yet when the imagination has been a little time entertained by the bubbles of fancy, reason must sicken at the gaudy *nothing*, and long for the quiet enjoyment of a life more congenial to the felicity of beings designed for immortality.

Was I not disposed to a ready compliance in the smallest wish of my amiable friend, she has annexed such a condition to a request in her last as effectually bars a refusal.

A likeness of the brave General Montgomery I shall esteem a favour indeed;—and as soon as I can get it executed will forward a miniature, which nothing but a sincere affection could induce you to ask. Am sorry there is not a more equal balance in the exchange, but if the resemblance of a brow furrowed by time (a countenance only indifferent in the bloom of youth, now wasted by care and grown pale in the party-coloured texture of the happiest life) will give you any pleasure it shall be much at your service.

M Warren

MWP1

1. Another passage from Hannah More, "Sir Eldred of the Bower," in *Poems* (Boston: Wells and Lilly, 1817), part 2, ll. 109–12. MOW changes original past-tense verbs to the present tense.

2. Sarah Livingston Jay, wife of American diplomat John Jay, daughter of Governor William Livingston of New Jersey, and a relation of Janet Livingston Montgomery. The Jays were headed to Spain, where John served as American commissioner.

50 TO JAMES WARREN

Plimouth March 12 1780

I know not how it is but in your abscence the sun seldom shines Either literally or Metaphorically but I no more touch on that string. Heaven minds the bounds of our Habitation as well as the Duration of our Lives, & a few more Revolutions of the Celestial orb will set us beyond the Cares that now interrupt the tranquility of the soul.

I forward you the extract desired but have too great a regard for the character of the person to whom he has been compared to wish any use may be made of it to his disadvantage. besides I think no man would be sooner suspected of having an invidious design by making it public than yourself & no man has less personal Reason to Depreciate one so justly or universally admired.

I know not what Reasons our son[1] may have to urge him abroad at this perilous time & perhaps I may not till the determination is made. it pains me Exceedingly that I see so little of him. I seem to be always tossing between Expectation & Disappointment & though I have reason to admit[?] that they hitherto have not been of a severer kind, yet the Mind is unhinged by the Repetition. Each day of Frustrated hope—more than three months have I been looking out for a Visit from a Child who possesses Every tender Avenue of my soul. I sometimes think I have but little more to do in this Theatre. The chearfulness of my mind is Broken by a long struggle to conform to what Necessity makes your Choice & which is so dissonant to my own Idea of Happiness & my pain increased by continued self Reproach that my Inclinations do not so Comport with my duty as to Enable me to wear a Countenance Ever brightened by the pride of Joy, when I know Nothing Contributes more to your happiness. My children leave me Early, & I seem to grow useless to them, & I am sometimes Ready to think you could serve the public as well & perhaps better unembarased by anxieties for me. I am not Hipocrite Enough to conceal the secret Regrets that prey upon my mind & Interrupt my peace though I have a Thousand times Resolved it for your sake.

My mind is made of Materials too succeptable of Every tender passion & my Gloomy North East Corner where days & Nights though Boreas Whistles in my Ears & the white Billows Roll before my Eyes Leads me to anticipate all the Evils of Life, & as no [??] Voice Breaks in upon the silent

Contemplation, I sometimes Recover myself by a shower of tears which flow from a sense of Gratitude that they are not yet Reallized, & that my Maker suffers me again to hope for what He has so often indulged to me of the most unworthy of His Rational Creations.

Reason & Religion teaches me I have no other [??] to the many Blessings I possess than the Benificent tenor[?] of free[?] Indulgence. In fact[?] the fear that I Improve not with due thankfulness often distresses me.
[no signature]

MWP2, RC

1. The son here is WW, still in Boston.

51 TO WINSLOW WARREN

Plymouth March 25th 1780

As a variety of circumstances have long postponed the pleasing expectation of seeing a son who possesses every tender avenue of my soul and least some accident should prevent me once more folding him in my arms before he embarks to visit the European shores, I take my pen in my hand, while my heart is lifted to him whose eye pervades the most remote corner of the habitable globe, and whom I fervently implore to spread the wing of his protecting providence around the bark that conveys and to shower its choicest blessings on the head of an amiable youth, till his natal soil shall hail his happy return.

You are going into a world of strangers and at an early period of life entering alone a wide theatre of action; nor do I wish to retard the manly pursuit by an expressions of timidity so natural to my sex or the stronger emotions that will sometimes croud themselves into the opposite scale, when the exertions of fortitude have almost got the better of maternal fears.

But you must remember in order to keep the mind in due equilibrium that a youth blessed with many personal accomplishments, warm in the pursuit of business, pleasure, and the road to honour, ought to be well acquainted with *himself* as well as with the history of *man*.

Observation and reflection must be the substitute for experience to enable him to parry the successful arts of intrigue and seduction, that have

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been practised by both sexes to ensnare the steps of the unwary, whom neither time nor misfortune has led to suspect the delusory nature of the sudden advance and the sanguine promise of attachment.

You will find in the country to which you are about to repair the highest refinements of luxury and the most elegant pleasures shining through the enchanting vizard of politeness;—allurements almost irresistable where there is a susceptible mind

The graceful appearance, the polished manners, embellished by a scientific education, and a systematical design[?] of pleasing (which is the characteristick of the nation) are more likely to beckon into the flowery path of error, those who have genius, taste, and a laudatory ambition to excel, than such as are of a cooler constitution and less towering hope.

But if the barriers of virtue are planted round the heart and fixed on the solid basis of principle, though every temptation is heightened by the glare of novelty and the road to vice decorated by all that can charm the eye or fire the imagination of youth, he may yet be safe by calling into action those philosophic maxims which are beautiful in theory, but in practise sublime.

A mind thus fortified will be but feebly influenced by the licentious or the sceptical, the votaries to pleasure, the drudges in business, or the designing hypocrite, who ingratiates himself under the disguise of friendship and counteracts the best purposes of a generous, unsuspecting heart.

Some such characters you have met with here;—many more you will be introduced to abroad. Both in Europe and America the prostitution of moral sentiment is the fashion of the time;—to sport with the principles of revealed religion is characteristick of the *Ton*, to weaken the feelings of moral rectitude and improvement on the style.

To make the most of short life to trifle themselves into a belief that this is their all, and to persu[a]de the *man* he shall enjoy the glorious priviledge of annihilation, when the period of the present existence is hastened by the most irrational pursuits;—and an indulgence to the lowest gratifications of animal nature this comprises the whole arcana of doctrine which some celebrated writers in this age of frivolity and fancy have so industriously and so successfully inculcated.[1]

But I do not consider you as belonging to this reptile class—I have no reason to suspect that any criminal passions have obtruded on your walks, though your taste for elegant amusements may be carried rather too high.

You have an understanding improved by the perusal of the best authors, and judgment beyond your years.

You are possessed of a native greatness of soul which I have watched from your infancy and marked as capable of the extremes of good or evil, yet blended with such traits of modest worth as will evince at once that you do violence to your own feelings if ever you sacrifice the probity which is the brightest ornament of a finished character, at the shrine of interest or pleasure. While I hope you are endowed with resolution to resist the most flattering charms of irregularity I think you have that firmness of mind that will lead you to look down with contempt on the shafts of envy and the private stabs of calumny that lurk in the dark; whetted by party malice, they attempt to wound the heart of the parent by levelling the pointless arrow where it is more likely to penetrate than if aimed directly at his own breast.

A man who has just notions of honour will ever consider an unsullied reputation as his best possession; but it is happy for society that its security depends on himself; for such is the world that though accident, emulation, or malignancy may raise a temporary clamour (if undeserved) it speedily rebounds on the head of the slanderer. There is a certain uniformity in virtue which sets on an eminence and renders invulnerable its adherents, and the stricter the scrutiny the more conspicuously real merit will shine.

You never can know my dear son the affectionate tenderness that agitates my whole frame when my fears are awakened for the safety of your person, character or morals;—a corruption of the last is generally certain destruction to the first: but the mind uncontaminated both the man and reputation are impregnable. My childrens interest and happiness are so interwoven with every fibre of my heart that the struggle is great when I consent than an Ocean should divide us, though I hope it will be but a temporary seperation.

As no attention has ever been wanting to form your mind to the noblest purposes, and to lead your ideas to grasp at a felicity that outweighs all that can be circumscribed within the limits of a perishable world, I trust that in the ardour of youthful enterprize, and amidst the silken hope which hangs on the wing of expectation, you will not be unmindful that all depends on the protection of him, who fathoms *Creation* with a glance, whose benignity is as ready to aid and his arm as potent to guard in one country as another.

The licentious trifler who renounces his confidence in a superintending providence cuts himself off from a more steady equipoize in prosperity and a more permanent support in adversity than all the sages of antiquity could produce, or the more enlightened infidels exhibit in times when the highest refinements of genius are displayed in proof that the reasoning spark shall be extinguished, when the animal functions cease.

As the distance and other coincidents may prevent that frequent and agreeable intercourse which I always wish, you will lay this by in your cabinet not as an useless scrip, but reperuse it at your leisure; it will certainly be advantageous to you in some future period of your life, perhaps when these lids which are now longing to see you are closed in darkness and the hand that holds the tablet is stiffened in the cold lodgment of the tomb. Remember it contains *truth* unchangeable in its nature—whose Radiant lustre will continue immutably the same when the wrangling disputant will be struck dumb, and the superb vanities of time be swept away.

Truth, which though inculcated by the lip of a *woman* it is one who has made human nature her study, the law of reason her guide, and strengthened by the sanctions of the christain code can smile with equal contempt on the laboured syllogisms of modern philosophy (ridiculously pretending to fathom the divine councils, and to penetrate the designs of Deity) or at the witticisms of the sarcastic scribbler who conscious of his own turpitude, wishes to leap over the Stage into a state of non-existence.

I will only add my fervent prayer, that wherever you reside your character may be dignified by that magnanimity which will teach you to despise every action which on the severest retrospect would lead you to dread the idea of an eternal duration. Write one long letter more before you embark to your very affectionate mother
M Warren

MWP1

1. Note in Letterbook draft reads, "Lord Chesterfield and others."

52 TO JOHN ADAMS

Boston May 8th 1780

Dear Sir

I now put a letter of introduction into the hand of a son who agreeable to your polite and friendly invitation waits on you on his first arrival at Paris. I believe I may venture to say he is a youth, who, will by no part of his conduct, disgrace the recommendations of the friend, or disappoint the expectations of the parent. Yet whoever enters at an early period amidst a world of strangers, ought to be well acquainted with himself as well as the history of man, while he traverses a stage, where art not nature reigns. Even thus guarded, without the aid of experience, he may be liable to many inconveniences in a country, where politeness assumes the air of friendship, where refinement is wrought up to the extreme of elegance, and luxury digested into a systematical desire to please.

I am too well acquainted with your disposition, to think it necessary to ask your philosophic hints, which united with his own good sense, I have no doubt will lead him through with approbation.

I esteem myself very happy, in the full confidence of friendship with a gentleman, at once so competent to advise, direct, and aid, and so ready to point the youthful ardour of early years to that line of conduct which only can lead to happiness.

The views of this young gentleman whose felicity lies so near my heart, are chiefly of a commercial nature. Yet properly improved by industry and observation it may be a happy opportunity of qualifying for more extensive usefulness.

I have no idea that the morals of youth will suffer much by leaving Boston, for any part of Europe; though once I should have trembled for the safety of a son, in the morning of expectation, in the zenith of warm hope, stepping into the larger theatres of luxury, business, and intrigue, but the change of manners in this country has brought me to bid defiance to any disagreeable consequences from a change of place.

Maternal tenderness would lead out the mind to a thousand [??] on this occasion, which civility to you, and an attention to your public avocations forbid. Mr Warren will write you more fully on this subject, and with regard to the present situation of your beloved country he will not be negligent.

Baptists, Deists, Quakers, Priests, and Politicians have laboured assiduously to expunge all religious establishments in the new Constitution of Goverment. But I believe (spite of the whole group) the form of Godliness, will yet be kept up among us, though it may have little influence on the moral character, at least so long as our depreciating currency continues to deaden the nobler feelings of the soul; and the easy acquisition of the means of luxury improves the taste of the most expensive and enervating pleasures.

The celebrated Abbe Raynal has observed, that "even among a free people, friends to humanity, the thirst for money, the most cruel and tormenting of all passions, has frequently given rise to a pernicious and destructive goverment."[1] But though the spirit of accumulation is rampant among us, and checks the desire of improvements more agreeable to reason and nature, yet this baneful passion is not the only danger that threatens an infant republic.

When the luxuries of Europe are adopted by a people, who push all their purposes with a degree of enthusiasm characteristic of the North American, it must raise the taste for elegance and the most refined pleasures to the highest pitch, and consequently subvert every principle of that republican spirit which requires patience, probity, industry, and self denial for its support, virtues, which already sit solitary in our land;—while vanity, ignorance; and supercilious folly, cloathed with the plumage of sudden acquisition, tinctured with the crude opinions of the mimic Deist, thrust forward the self important visage, and take the lead in the theory of religion and goverment, in the adjustment of the ceremonies of the drawing room, or in the misteries of the gaming table, and in the secret councels of the political cabinet.

But we have yet some virtues among us, and gratitude is none of the least. It was remarkably displayed on the return of the Marquis La Fayette to this place. A general satisfaction was diffused through each countenance, and every expression of respect—manifested on his arrival. And while the heroic character of this accomplished young nobleman, engages universal esteem and admiration, his easy manners, his affable demeanor, and his polite address, win him the hearts of all who have the honour of his acquaintance. Yet, when I hear him converse I cannot but waft a sigh across the Atlantic for his most amiable lady, as well as for many others

who by the cruel necessity of the times are obliged to suffer the interruption of domestic felicity.

But these may be the antiquated notions of the last century, which the polish of modern days has rubbed so briliant a standard that there are few who cannot be as happy in the society of others as with those to whom they are connected by the strongest tie.—Yet, I am far from being singular;—you have a friend at Braintree, that will accede to every sentiment. I purpose to call on her in a few days, and if possible prevail with her to go to Plymouth with me. I expect on my way to be entertained with the perusal of some of your letters. When you recieve this, I shall have a claim as usual on your politeness, and call for one in my own right.

My son does not propose to stay long in France, but he will open his own plans when he has the honour of seeing you, who I am very sensible will, even without an application from me, do all that friendship and generosity dictate, to prevent his disappointment in this tour—and to render his pursuits successful.

You will Sir, remember me with tenderness to my young friends Messieurs John and Charles,[2] then will I subscribe with every sentiment of respect, and esteem your obliged and very
Humble Servant
M Warren

MWP1

1. Guillaume Thomas François, Abbé Raynal (1713–96), French writer well known to North Americans for various books, including *L'Histoire philosophique et politique des établissements et du commerce des Européens dans les deux Indes* (n.p.: Amsterdam, 1770).

2. The sons of John Adams.

53 TO JOHN SLOSS HOBART

[Another death brought forward from MOW another letter to a bereaved family member of the deceased. This time, the deceased was MOW's neighbor and long-time friend Ellen Hobart Lothrop, and the recipient her brother, John Sloss Hobart (1738–1805), whom MOW barely knew. Hobart was a Revolutionary political

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figure from New York who, because of destruction to his property on Long Island, had to relocate temporarily to his family home in Fairfield, Connecticut.]

Plymouth June 9th 1780

Sir,

The formality of a letter of condolence is no part of my inducement to address you; the affection you must have felt for an amiable sister[1] has its weight, but the love I bore my excellent friend Mrs. Lothrop forbids a non compliance with a request repeatedly urged; it is probably her partiality might lead her to thin a line to her beloved brother from one she had long considered in the highest stile of friendship could not fail to be agreeable. But whatever was her motive in desiring it, I am happy in the compliance, both as it was her wish, and as no one has had greater opportunities of observing the progress she made in the road to glory than myself. The poet's image of patience, or a monument smiling at grief, will give you some idea of the quiet resignation with which she struggled under a painful disorder;[2] but the higher descriptions of the sacred pen, which exhibit faith and hope bidding defiance to the dread tyrant, that holds in bondage the children of men will convey a livelier picture of her closing scene. The serene calm that overspread her countenance was without any mixture of the raptures of enthusiasm, or the affectation of superior philosophy; it was the dignity of virtue; it was the fortitude of the christian; and in full confidence if she saw not her Saviour clearly at this end of the vale, she should behold him at the other;—an expression of her own a few hours before she expired; with a placidity peculiar to herself, she ventured beyond the threshold of eternity without a fear. It is not a gloomy subject, yet such is the strength of passion and the weakness of human nature, that the tear starts from my eye;—and this hand trembles when it is about to tell you it is but a few days since it closed the lids of one whom I never saw but a reciprocal glow of affection gladdened each cheek.

"A friend in purchase for a world is gain."

Then you, Sir, will excuse it if while I wish to console the fraternal bosom, the sigh of a wounded breast, and the plaintive voice of one, who has been used to look into the tomb for her associates, should reach your ear before the sympathetic hand wipes the tear from your face;—but nothing I can say will so readily hush the tumult of every tender passion as the

satisfaction she expressed the last time I heard her mention your name, in the contemplation that you was filling up the measure of your duty and though that forbid an interview on earth, a few short scenes would bring you together in a state of perfect, permanent felicity. She has left a shining example; I love to dwell on the subject, I loved her much;—and though not much acquainted with Mr Hobart, I love to converse with the brother of my friend. In that light he will excuse the too warm pathos of expression, or the overflowings of a heart too susceptable of the painful vicissitudes that await us through the craggy paths of a probationary state.

As you Sir, experimentally know the critical and peculiarly trying situation of this country has compelled many to be much absent from the domestic roof, where only true happiness resides it is sufficient to say Mr Warren's being now at Boston prevents him joining me in every expression of friendship for your deceased sister;—may you both live to see the happy effects of your exertions and taste that glory which belongs more to useful and virtuous than to splendid actions. I trust the being who presides over the fate of Empires;—who has mighty purposes to answer by permitting the convulsions of nations, will not suffer us after repeated shocks, after all the struggles between ambition and liberty to set down at last (as a celebrated writer expresses it) totally reconciled to the wretched tranquillity of servitude, and behold with indifference the various ranks of slaves combating each other with their claims for the amusement of their masters.[3]

When you present my compliments to Mrs Hobart, you will assure her of the sincerest wishes that you may both enjoy that degree of felicity here which is consistent with the full harvest, I hope we shall jointly partake, when the shadows of time are passed away, and we again renew the friendships begun beneath the stars.

I am Sir with much esteem your friend & humble servant

M Warren

MWP1

1. Ellen Hobart Lothrop, MOW's friend and neighbor.

2. Note in Letterbook draft reads, "Cancer."

3. Although MOW appears to refer to another writer, her passage echoes a pamphlet published as a speech by Samuel Adams of August 1, 1776, but which is likely a fiction by an anonymous hand. One passage of the pamphlet reads, "Contemplate the mangled bodies of your countrymen, and then say what should be the reward of such sacrifices. Bid us and

our posterity bow the knee, supplicate the friendship, and plough and sow and reap, to glut the avarice of the men who have let loose on us the dogs of war to riot in our blood, and hunt us from the face of the earth! If ye love wealth better than liberty, the tranquility of servitude than the animating contest of freedom, go home from us in peace. We ask not your counsels or arms. Crouch down and lick the hands which feed you. May your chains sit lightly upon you, and may posterity forget that ye were our countrymen." William V. Wells, *The Father of the Revolution: The Life and Public Services of Samuel Adams* (1888; rpt. Freeport, N.Y.: Books for Libraries Press, 1969), 3:414–15. On the unlikelihood of the attribution to Adams, see ibid., 2:440.

54 TO JANET LIVINGSTON MONTGOMERY

Plymouth June 178[0][1]

My dear and Worthy Friend,

I received your last agreeable favour in the darkened apartment of a most amiable friend,[2] languishing under a cruel and painful disorder. A period was soon after put to the life of a lady in whom was encountered[?] the affability and sweetness of good humour, the delicate sensibility of friendship, the discretion of the feminine, the judgment and decision of the masculine soul, and the mild virtues of the christian.

She was my near neighbor her smile gladdened the social hour of almost every day: connected by the strong ties of affection, an interchange of sentiment between us made a part of my happiness for many years. This friend is now numbered with the silent inhabitants of the grave.

Death made its approaches by such slow degrees, as to give her an opportunity of exhibiting an example of dignity in distress, of calm acquiescence in suffering, tempered with such manly fortitude and resignation as did honour to the religion she professed.

How does such a religion triumph over the weak systems of infidelity, and the whole tribe of modernized sceptics? If one of them was to behold the serene eye of [??] *faith*, smiling at every intimation that the period hastened [??] would dissolve the connexion between the immortal principle and the clay tenement, thus about to leap the verge of eternity, without either mixture of fear, or the rapture of enthusiasm, would he not think her supported by a divine philosophy, that far outweighs the half digested hope of annihilation, that buoys up the deistical trifles of our times?

our posterity bow the knee, supplicate the friendship, and plough and sow and reap, to glut the avarice of the men who have let loose on us the dogs of war to riot in our blood, and hunt us from the face of the earth! If ye love wealth better than liberty, the tranquility of servitude than the animating contest of freedom, go home from us in peace. We ask not your counsels or arms. Crouch down and lick the hands which feed you. May your chains sit lightly upon you, and may posterity forget that ye were our countrymen." William V. Wells, *The Father of the Revolution: The Life and Public Services of Samuel Adams* (1888; rpt. Freeport, N.Y.: Books for Libraries Press, 1969), 3:414–15. On the unlikelihood of the attribution to Adams, see ibid., 2:440.

54 TO JANET LIVINGSTON MONTGOMERY

Plymouth June 178[0][1]

My dear and Worthy Friend,

I received your last agreeable favour in the darkened apartment of a most amiable friend,[2] languishing under a cruel and painful disorder. A period was soon after put to the life of a lady in whom was encountered[?] the affability and sweetness of good humour, the delicate sensibility of friendship, the discretion of the feminine, the judgment and decision of the masculine soul, and the mild virtues of the christian.

She was my near neighbor her smile gladdened the social hour of almost every day: connected by the strong ties of affection, an interchange of sentiment between us made a part of my happiness for many years. This friend is now numbered with the silent inhabitants of the grave.

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This recent adieu to a much esteemed friend is not the first occasion I have had to contemplate and to cherish a sentiment expressed in yours that it is not repugnant either to reason or to religion to believe that the spirits of our deceased friends preside over our steps.

In the solemnity of a lonely hour it is a pleasing speculation, to place ourselves under the eye of those we loved, or in the gay or busy scenes of life it is pleasing to consider them inspecting our actions, and smiling in unison with a self approving conscience. Nor am I disposed to reject as groundless or fanciful, the mode of thinking in which the weary mind of my friend has found consolation while imagining herself pointed to the path of duty by the invisible shade of her departed hero.

Yet still we have a more certain and a more animating motive to virtue when we consider that the eye of *omnicience* traces the most secret recesses of the heart; that the hidden springs lie open to him who is the source, the sum, and the pattern of perfection.

If the completion of the friendship begun here will enhance our happiness in the world of spirits as probably it will, there is no doubt but his omnipotence will conduct us through the vale of death and reunite us to the beloved associates of our militant state as well as to the millions of beings beneath himself, whose heights of excellence will strike the soul newly released, with wonder, astonishment, and love.

These reflections are powerful incentives to action: they are rational motives to those philosophic exertions, necessary to bear up the mind through the rotation of painful events that invade the happiest lot of mortality.

Was it in my power to undertake the journey, neither your polite invitations nor your sisters kind solicitudes need be repeated, to urge me to the banks of the Hudson.[3] Among other reasons that would precipitate my *tour*, I wish to see your excellent mother encircled by her amiable daughters: I have formed a high idea of the taste and manners of that good lady, and while I congratulate her on the domestick felicity she enjoys, in the sprightly conversation of a family of daughters;—from my own experience, I can enter into her felicity, when the sons have the parental roof and ramble from city to city among nations which till lately, we have known only from the page of history.

I have no doubt she will unite with me in the most fervent prayers, that my son, who embarks this day for France;—and hers who designs soon to visit the European shores, may both be guarded from every evil to which

they may be exposed, and successfully returned to their natal soil and to the arms of their fond and tender friends.

If Mr. Tillotson and lady[4] are yet at the Manor of Livingston you will remind them with affection of your friend and

Humble Servt

M Warren

MWP1

1. Dated 1781 in Letterbook draft, but the RC now at Princeton is dated June 14, 1780.

2. Probably Ellen Lothrop, who died in 1780. See L 53.

3. Montgomery must be at Clermont, the Livingston seat; she would eventually move to her own home on the Hudson, which she had built in 1804.

4. Dr. Thomas Tillotson of Maryland married Janet Montgomery's sister Margaret Livingston in 1779 and served as a military physician during the war.

55 TO WINSLOW WARREN[1]

[As if WW's social escapades and his trip to Europe were not cause enough for his mother's concern, he added to her distress when his Holland-bound ship, the *Pallas*, was captured off Newfoundland by the British admiral and governor Richard Edwards and taken to St. John's. WW remained a prisoner there for a number of months, although he was apparently treated with relative civility. Later in the summer, other Americans, including the American diplomat Henry Laurens, were also captured. WW, Laurens, and John Steele Tyler (the brother of future playwright Royall Tyler) were then sent in September to London as prisoners. Although WW's ship was seized in May, MOW did not learn of it until August.]

Plymouth August 20th 1780

My dear son,

My mind is this moment releived from the greatest anxiety;—two days since, I heard you had been made a prisoner by the capture of the Pallas. All the horrors of a guard-ship arose before me, and imagination presented a beloved son, pale and emaciated by hunger and hardship, reduced to the same distresses into which the wretchedness of war has plunged many

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who like himself had been used to more than the conveniences of life; who had not only been nursed in the lap of affluence, but blessed with tender and judicious friends, which adds the highest zest to enjoyment.

I now understand you have not fallen into the hands of an ungenerous enemy—but that humanity and politeness mark the character of the man, as benevolence, hospitality and honour distinguish the commander of the British squadron at St. John's.

If any one connected with him by friendship or blood should ever be detained in the United States, I wish it may be in my power to manifest my gratitude to him by doubling that attention to their happiness which the feelings of compassion ever excite in my bosom towards the unfortunate.[2]

But I am far from considering you in that class at present and if you accept the genteel offer of a passage to Holland &c. via England it may give you more pleasure, and perhaps be attended with greater advantages than if you had pursued your first plan. But as you have from an early period been left to form your own projections, your parents will throw no embarrassments in your way from motives of affection or fear, but still leave to your own judgment, the determination of your choice, when you have balanced the circumstances in favour of returning in the next Cartel, with advantages you may reap from pursuing your intended voyage to Europe.
M Warren

MWP1

1. Note in Letterbook draft reads, "When a prisoner of war—captured by Admiral Edwards and carried to Newfoundland."

2. Note in Letterbook draft reads, "I had the pleasure of returning the civilities of Admiral Edwards to my son, by attentions to two of his nephews afterwards captured and brought to Boston, by the Ship Alliance, on board which your Brother James was an officer, who acted his part in an engagement with two British armed Ships to the approbation of the American Commander and everyone else. Both the British Ships were captured by the Alliance. One of them was a twenty gun Ship commanded by a nephew of Admiral Edwards. This officer appeared much gratified by the visit made to your parents. His brother was so wounded that he could not attend. I have sometimes thought it a singular circumstance, that two of the family of Admiral Edwards should in so short a time after the captivity of one of my sons, be brought prisoners into our harbour by an American Frigate, which had the active assistance of another of my sons to reduce them to the same misfortune so recently experienced by my Winslow."

56 TO WINSLOW WARREN

[Another version of this letter is in the Letterbook, dated November 20. In the present version, the RC, many words have been struck through for later change; the editors have restored as much as possible the original wording.]

Boston Nov 7th 1780

My Dearest Son,

I yesterday Received a letter Via St. Eustatius with an account of your situation. The Exercise of your patience in waiting thus long the Return of the Cartel, in so disagreable a place as N. foundland., your Description of that steril spot, your preference to Boston, the Breathings of patriotism towards your Native country, the sentiments of affection to your Friends, & contempt for such in Boston as deserve not that appelation are warmly Expressed.

By the Vicissitudes you have Experienced at so Early a period I am sensibly touched & Every painful sensation you feel Recoils back to the Bosom of an affectionate Mother. Yet I have a certain pleasure in hoping the best advantages may Result from the most unexpected turns of Fortune, & this hope is strengthened when I recur to your letter & find the most of your hours since your captivity has been spent in reading, writing, & Reflecting. Reflection and Recollection are the great priviledges of Man. It is this that gives Consistency to all his actions, that Maintains a Dignity in adversity and Brightens the countenance with the Emanations of the most Benevolent affection in the sunshine of prosperity.

The Experience of ages will have little influence on the man who does not give Himself time to consider the certain consequences at Each time of conduct that Either inclination, Connexion, or Example may lead him to pursue.

The Whirl of pleasure leaves [??] for such [??] & a life of dissipation soon destroys that Inclination. Thus many are Hurryed into Habits their Reason Censures & form Attachments their judgment Condemns, & thus are they prevented from a systematical pursuit of those objects most Worthy their Attention.

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On your arrival in Europe I hope you have found Letters, some of Recommendation & many of Friendship. We have improved all opportunities & have wrote under direction to England, Holland, & France.

I feel myself strongly impressed by the civility shown you and if ever it should be in my power shall make the most gratful returns for the polite treatment you have received from strangers.

The American papers will give you the public News. Charlston[1] was in the hands of the British army before you left Boston. No very Capital stroke has since been struck on Either side. A general Exchange of prisoners has lately taken place by which the Convention troops are liberated. You will have a Narative of the Blackned Treachery of Arnold and the Fall of the Brave Major Andre—while Every tongue acceded to the justice of his sentence, Every Eye droped a tear at the Necessity of His Execution.[2] Thus a Man capable of wearing the Brightest Laurels of Glory in the Field has died by the hand of the Executioner amidst the armies of America but without one personal Enemy.

If you live to return to this place, you will find many alterations. You will see some great Fortunes squandered & some little Folks in Rank and perhaps some of the best patriots in this City Retired & unnoticed, but the flame can never be smothered, the opperations of the passions, & the Wheel of politicks, as well as the Wheel of Fortune, move with Rapidity & a little time may give more Consistency & Firmness to your Country, which has been Relaxed by the Feelings of distress they long beheld in theory, Duped by the Artifices of their Enemies & deceived by a Depreciating Currency. But American Independance is an object of too great Magnitude to be much affected by the Local circumstances of partys. We *shall* be a free people, but the prize cannot be obtained till the convulsion has shaken Every Nerve & the Nation Wearied with slaughter Shall feel the Hand of Nature & of providence giving Truce to the Miseries of Man.

You will hear the New Constitution of government has taken place in the state of Massachusets, but I am sorry to say we have not begun upon that Oeconomical plan which ought to Mark an Infant Republic. Mr. Hancock is chosen Governor & as you know he is a Man not less Fond of the pageantry of power than tickled with popular applause. He will use Every art to retain both.

Your good Father was appointed Leut. Governor but as he was Vested before with a very important public Employ Deemed by some incompatible with his Temporary Honour[?], he Declined an acceptance therof.[3]

When years & Experience have Matured your Judgment, may you deem as Worthy that Confidence of your country as of that Fondest affection of the
Tender Mother
M Warren

In future I shall Number the letter I Forward you while you tarry in Europe, that you may know how many are lost. If I Recollect Exactly this is the 9th to your Direction since you left Boston.

MWP2, RC

1. Charleston, South Carolina, recently captured by the British.

2. This famous episode involving General Benedict Arnold's attempt to exchange control of the American fort at West Point for his defection to the British, the capture of British go-between Major John André, and André's execution as a spy by George Washington occurred in September and October 1780.

3. By this time, JW and John Hancock had become bitter political enemies. The Warrens despised Hancock's public-relations stunts, his love of pomp, and his outward currying of favor with the working classes. Unfortunately, JW's refusal to serve as lieutenant governor aided his enemies by giving them ammunition for their charge that JW did not serve his country fully. His excuse may have been his service on the Continental Navy Board, Eastern Department.

57 TO CATHERINE LIVINGSTON

[Boston, November 23, 1780]

My Dear Miss Livingston,

A Direct Conveyance gives me the pleasing opportunity of inquiring after the Welfare of my Friends at the Mannor & thanking you for a very agreeable Letter which lies unanswered. I was Entertained by the account of your Late Journey. The Narative style is Easy, the Characters amiable, & your Descriptions pleasing.

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Coll A [or H?]—[his?] character I had before heard, my opinion was enhaunced by your partiality, but greatly Heightened by the Elegance and Humanity of his own Letter on the Infamous Arnold & the unfortunate Andre. General Washington I Respected & Venerated from the first Moment I had the Honour of his acquaintance, his Lady I know & Love. The Happy Man who is to be connected with the charming Widow is yet a stranger, but you have brought me to be Interested in his Happiness & to bear him every good Wish & may you my dear Kitty find some one Marked with as many Virtues, Distinguished by your favour & Disentangled by any previous engagement. for be assured it is no Flattery when I tell you your Happiness will ever be an object with me.

But where is my amiable friend Mrs Montgomery—is she Grown Weary of the Correspondence, or have I unfortunately Lost the Letters Designed me, that I have not seen her signature for more than eight Months. To you I stand indebted, Though am over charged one Letter at Least, But when friendship leads to converse I think the Emulation ought to be who shall make the most Ready communications. Letters mearly of compliment may be forced & the obligation canceled at Leasure—but as that is not the tenor of an Intercourse with a Family I Really Love, I cannot but wish to hear from Clermont much oftener than I have done this summer past.

Mrs. Tillotson I hope is well. A specimen of her fine spirits, good sense, & Vivacity I saw in a Letter to a Friend of mine & does[?] not she Recollect a promise that would give me a claim to have it confirmed by the Exercise of her Easy Epistolary tallents for the Entertainment of his sister.

I feel half tempted to talk of politics, but how preposterous to a young Lady. If Balls Assemblys & the Gayer Entertainments of youth should be my subject, should I not appear a Little awkward (at least at Description) as my time of Life, my Inclinations, & the situation of my country has long made me a stranger to the *Ettequit* of the Drawing Room, or the Brilliant Theaters of mear Amusement, where one is too apt to forget that our patriots Bleed, our Cities Blaze, & our armies shiver. Excuse the solemn Reflection. It is the Natural impulse of a Heart that feels too much for the Distresses of others. It is not meant to censure any of the Innocent Delights of youth among which I think Danceing the most graceful Elegant & pleasing Amusement.

My purpose was when I took up my pen to fill one sheet at Least that my Dear Girl might not again complain of my Brevity, yet I own I have

no great opinion of a letter whose principle Merit is in Its Length. But you are sensible that in Boston we cannot Always command our own time. Yet as I have a Moment more I will tell you I wish you was in this City when you might chat with me this Morning. We might Dine together in a Large circle of agreeable friends. The Evening Exhibits a Ball given by the Govenor, when your presence would gladden the company.[1] This would make Variety suficient for one day to gratify the most Curious of our sex.

My sister joins in best compliments to Dr. Tillotson, his Lady & yourself. Mr. Otis will call & pay his own Friendly Respects at the Mannor in a short time.[2] To the good Lady who presides & to the happy Inhabitants present the sincere Regards

Of your very affectionate Friend

M Warren

Boston Nov 23 1780

Wesleyan University library, RC

1. John Hancock, who was elected in 1780 as governor and reelected each year to 1785, was famous for giving balls and other splendid entertainments not quite to the taste of "old republicans" like MOW.

2. The Otis here may be MOW's younger brother Samuel Alleyne Otis.

58 TO WINSLOW WARREN

Plimouth Dec 16 1780

My Dear Son,

By a vessel captured & brought to Boston, I understand from one Capt. Carr that you Embarked for Europe about the 28th of Sept. But none of your letters since the Carteel[1] from N foundland have reached us Except those via St. Eustatia Dated August 10th & 23d.

If you have been gaurded through a long and Hazzardous voyage & have safely ar rived at the desired Haven, you have found some letters from your Friends, though doubtless Many have miscaried.

My concern for you has been Much increased since the Report of a Violent Gale which has greatly Damaged the shiping in the Channel. Yet I Endeavour to Hush my fears, to suspend my cares, & quietly Repose in the protection of that Being who spread the ocean round the Ball & holds the

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Fabrick in His Hand, Whose Fiat supports the universe, Who Established the Laws of Nature, yet when the purposes of His Goverment require it, commissions the Tempest to Destroy & the Besom of Ruin in a Moment sweeps whole cities from Existence.

The particulars of the Late Depopulations at Barbados, the Earth quakes in Jamaca & the Dreadful Effects of the Huricanes in several other Islands, you will have by public accounts as well as by private letters & perhaps more accurate than we can at present transmit you. But by what we can collect, the Desolation is greater than any that has Happened on this side of the globe for more than a century. It is said many thousand Houses were Destroyed at Barbados, St. Vincents &c, by the inundation on the 11th October, & the whole town of Savanah-LaVar Except one House sunk by an Earth quake the same week.

At the time that Multitudes were perishing both by the Land & sea, my W—w was traversing the Deep.—But He has Escaped the perils of the Boistrous Elements and perhaps Ere this has Experienced Dangers of a more fatal tendency. But the same Almighty arm which has Wafted him safe to a Foreign shore can reconduct him to his Natal soil with Health unimpaired, his Honour unimpeached, & his Morals uncorrupt.

You have yet a Father that will give you Every Necessary Hint Relative to Mercantile Matters, but if any unexpected Embarasment in your affairs or Disapointment in the way of Bussiness should take place, Let it by no means affect your spirits. Youth, Industry, & commercial Abilities will Extricate from a thousand Difficulties that would sink a Mind of less Vigour and an understanding less improved by Despondency. If you succeed in your Views & Return Beneath the smile of Fortune, let your gratitude be Exeplefyed by your Moderation & prudence.

I find you consider your situation while a prisoner a kind of pennance or Rather a just Ballance for the pleasure you Expected to reap on your arrival in Europe. *Pleasure* is a term of so Indefinite a Nature that one cannot always tell whither to check or to Encourage the pursuit. If as the poet says:

> "Reason, whole pleasure—all the Days of sense.
> "Lie in three words: Health, Peace, & Competence—"[2]

it may be found any where—if in the loose gratification of a Roving appetite for Beauty, if in the Noisey Crakle of convivial Riot, or the gaudy glare of tinsel Distinctions—it will last no where. The sting hid in the

Rose Empoisons the [??] & the Man sickens at the Retrospect of the joyless Nothing.

If observation on the Manners, Laws, and customs of different countrys, a survey of Human Nature, the Variety of genius & character that marks Mankind—the general system of providence in permiting the Destruction of Nations and the Rise & fall of Empires is the Feild in which you Expect Fruition a Fund Indeed will open to your imagination when you visit the Ancient cities of the European World, more Especially when you Recollect the Revolutions Recorded in the page of History so much the Delight of your Early years.

I promiss myself *pleasure* in the perusal of your Journals, in the improvement of your Taste, in the Detail of many of your adventures & in the Naration of Everything that has had a tendency to the Cultivation of your Mind or the promotion of your Interest.

Probably when you obtain the American Inteligence you may hear some censures cast on an officer of Rank for his precipitant Retreat to Hillsborough after a late unfortunate action. Censure falls heavily when prejudice preponderates in the scale before justice has time to Decide. But few who know the *Man* will Beleive General G—ts[3] Either a coward or a Traytor. Doubtless, this Honest Republican rode off rather too fast for his own Reputation (when he found all was lost by the shameful conduct of a Body of troops too Disgraceful to our country to Name.) But have not Many of the most celebrated commanders in History been guilty of as capital Errors yet by a Happy Facillity of Expedients or by some fortuitous[4] circumstance they[?] suddenly Retrieved both Fortune & character. And I doubt not a short time will Restore the conqueror of Saritoga to the zenith of public opinion, but his private Happiness is Broken & his Domestic hopes cut off by the Death of his only son—a short fever put a period to the life of this sprightly promissing youth about the time of his Father's Misfortune.

To this Instance of the Brevity of life & the hasty Dissolution of the Highest Expectations of Ambition & glory, I must add the Recent account of the Death of the Admiral de Tourney.[5] He died at N port 2 days since after a very short sickness. Some suspect that a Brave officer may have Fallen a sacrifice to chagrin & Disappointment. But the counsels of princes & the Manuveres of public Ministers are alike inscrutable & perhaps if they were traced to the source by common observers, the Narrow passions

would be found in full play in the Bosom of the Monarch as the peasant & the meanest of the Vulgar Might have cleaner palms & purer heart than the statsman possessed of the Confidence of Nations & who with philosophic pride May Boast of powers too unlimited for so weak of creature as Man.

Our Friend Mr. Broom[6] has lost the New ship in which young Walker sailed last May. She was obliged to put to sea in the Huricane. The people all perished but a few who saved themselves by Holding the riging of a French ship in almost Equal Distress. Walker Escaped by tarrying at Martineco with Design to meet them at Cape Francois.

Disappointments have sometimes a Happy Effect on the Morals & Manners of youth.—When I write to those I greatly love, I sometimes Reach the Bottom of the page before I Recollect it is time to add the signature of your very affectionate Mother
M Warren

MWP2, RC

1. I.e., cartel.

2. Slightly misquoted from Alexander Pope, "Essay on Man," epistle 4, lines 77–78, in *Works*, vol. 2 (London: Gilliver, 1736).

3. General Horatio Gates, the commander of the American army for the Southern Department, suffered a terrible defeat at the hands of General Cornwallis at Camden, South Carolina, in August and retreated first to Charlotte, then to Hillsborough, North Carolina. His conduct came under fire, and he gave over command in the south to General Nathaniel Greene. Eventually, Gates, the hero of the victory at Saratoga, was cleared of wrongdoing. MOW also refers to the death of Gates's son Robert on October 4, 1780.

4. The word "incidental" is struck through.

5. The French naval officer Charles-Henri-Louis d'Arsac de Ternay died of typhus in Newport, Rhode Island, on December 15, 1780.

6. Possibly Samuel Broome, a merchant originally from New York with stores or firms in New Haven and Boston during the 1780s. For a brief period, he was also in business with Eliphalet Brush, a friend of WW's (for more on Brush, see L 61).

59 TO WINSLOW WARREN

Plimouth January 18 1781

If I have not been Remarkably unfortunate in the Conveyance you must have found so many letters to your direction on your arrival in Holland as might make it appear almost unnecessary again to take up my pen. But while you my son are absent and I am able to grasp a Quill, I shall Neglect no opportunity to gratify the wishes I know you feel to hear from so dear & so tender a friend. But if most of them, as is probable, are Devoted to the oozy Nymphs who Attend the Watery God below it may serve as an Interlude, amidst the variety of political packages, consigned to their perusal in these Days of danger And uncertainty.

Thus while Rough Neptune (by his fiercer Emissaries) the shaggy Titans, continues to impede the opperations of Mars & interrupt the Regular Communications which might accelerate the plans of War, Conquest, and Independence, I fear it will be Long before that Fabled Bloody Deity will be obliged to sheath his Hostile sword.

But I would wish this might Escape the Eye of Every Female Inquisitor, Either above or Below, the Wide stretched, sea green Carpet that separates us at present. Nor am I less apprehensive of the prying polititon who suspecting treason by Every Gale peeps into the most trifling scrip in hopes of pressing into the service of his system. But if any Rude Hand shall break the seal of this, I hope when he sees the simple Nature & Design therof he will not be so irritated by his Disappointment as to retard its progress to you. Yet I am still more solicitous for the safe Reception of yours for to the tender anxieties of fond affection, Expectation of Amusement is added to my Wishes while I wait for accounts from Europe.

Your observations, your feelings, your sentiments must be Replete with Entertainment as you travil through countrys where the *Grand* of Nature is Exhibited in the most striking forms & the Works of art have been improving for so many centuries under the Industrious hand of Man. Where as a celebrated writer Expresses it, "There are forms that would awe an Atheist into Belief without the help of other Argument. Where not a precipice, not a Torrent, not a Cliff but is pregnant with Religion & poetry."[1]

The Hand of Nature is at once so sublime And so Bold that it often Arrests our Contemplations when in the full Career of very different pursuits. And Frequently when we only mean to Entertain the Eye with the

ornaments of Life, Beautifyed in the highest Elegance of Taste, she throws some object in the way that leads the mind to the superior Pleasure of contemplating its Origin & Duration & thus the Heart is made better while Reason is Delighted & improved, an advantage which a participation in the choicest Luxuries of Life seldom bestows.

But though the Majesty of *Nature* commands the Attention And her innumerable Graces charm the soul, who can but smile at her Blind yet Fashionable Votaries who stop & pay a kind of Homage to the Vestiges of Deity, Instead of Raising their Adorations to the Being who sheds but faint traces of Himself in the Various Dresses with which He condescends to Adorn this Modern Goddess.

But shall the Happy season when the gay & the agreeable who possess Every Faculty be clouded by Moral Lectures. Shall sober speculation be always obtruded? Does my Good Mother forget that too much Moralizing tires And too much Reasoning often chills the mind?

No My son, nor does she forget that she is writing to one not apt to be Wearied if the page is protracted that bears him at once the cares, the affection, the hopes, the fears, the precepts, & the prayers of a Heart Glowing with that kind of Friendship which admits no Dissimulation & precludes Apology. And I dare say you would be Disappointed if you did not find in a corner of Each letter some premonition that cannot injure the most *Gaurded* Discreet youth.

It would not be prudent to transmit to you all that might give Entertainment to the inquisitive in such a critical Era as the present. You will Doubtless hear Many Exaggerated accounts from this Quarter of the World. You may perhaps hear our Generals have Revolted, our army Disaffected, our Medium sunk & public credit Destroyed. Thus sing the Enemies of America, and thus sighs *Avarice* And groans out his concern for his country over the Hoarded Bags that might prevent a Thousand of its Distresses.

It is true we have Lost the Infamous Arnold, A man without principle from the Beginning & perhaps Destitute of true Courage though occasionally Brave. He had sunk a character Raised by little merit, And a Fortune accumulated by great crimes, long before he formed the plan to Betray his Country & sacrifice a cause Disgraced by the appointment of a man like Himself to so important a trust.

The British army at the city of N York has been Lately Borne into a tumult of Joy by the secession of a part of the Pensylvania Line. But not a

Delay of arrearages, a Deficiency of Cloathing, nor the Distresses of Winter could induce these Brave Fellows to Listen to the Flattering offers made them by G. Clinton.[2] His Emmissaries were sent to Congress, the soldiers Returned to their Duty, & justice both in payment & penalty we hope will take place.

But as more than two parts of the Globe are Convulsed by a flash[?] caught in America, it may well be supposed to be so bussy a theatre that the limits of a sheet will not contain the transactions of the Day were I disposed to paint in the Narative style.

If you meet a Dignifyed Friend of ours[3] in Holland you will with my Respectful compliments tell him I should not have Expected a Gentleman who had spent so much time in the politest court in Europe would be so Remarkably Deficient in the Etiquette of life as to impose silence on a Lady. But my Revenge shall be to write him again when I feel myself Disposed & tell him the civilities Bestowed on you will bring her more in manners[?] than the most Elegant Billet from himself
to your affectionate Mother
M Warren

MWP2, RC[4]

1. Passage from a November 16, 1739, letter written by Thomas Gray while traveling in Italy: "In our little journey up to the Grande Chartreuse, I do not remember to have gone ten paces without an exclamation that there was no restraining: not a precipice, not a torrent, not a cliff, but is pregnant with religion and poetry. There are certain scenes that would awe an atheist into belief, without the help of other argument." *Gray's Poems, Letters, and Essays*, introd. John Drinkwater (London: Dent, 1963), 105.

2. A near mutiny by an American battle group, the Pennsylvania Line, caused consternation within the Continental Army, but they never defected, despite what MOW identifies as overtures to do so by General Sir Henry Clinton, the supreme commander of British forces.

3. JA, with whom WW would eventually meet up in The Hague in May and again in Paris in July.

4. This letter also exists in a Letterbook transcription. In addition to a few single-word differences between the two versions, the recopied version has extra material not in the RC.

60 TO WINSLOW WARREN

[In 1781 the Warrens purchased the former home of their political enemy Thomas Hutchinson in Milton and moved in. The house was much closer to Boston and had a beautiful view and acreage that JW could farm. Eventually, however, the cost of maintaining both the home, which MOW called Tremont, and their Plymouth properties during a period of specie scarcity at the end of the war forced them to sell it and remove to Plymouth in 1788.]

Milton Sept 28 1781

My Dear Son,

My pen has so long layn useless that I feel a Little awkward in the Resumtion. My Decayed Health & weakened Eyes have prevented me writing a Line to any one since my Direction to you in January Last. Nor dare I now Venture much more than to Intimate a small part of the pleasure I receive in the perusal of your Letter by Mr. [??]. I have not yet seen that gentleman. Expect he will Visit me tomorrow, when I shall bid him welcome not only from inclination but as a Testimony that the Wishes of a son, amiable, affectionate, & Virtuous shall be complied with both with regard to himself & Friends.

You ask me is Dr. F[1] a knave or is He an Honest Man. Do you think Ld Hillsborough[2] a good painter. I take a certain portrayt of his to be no Contemptable specimen of his art.

[??] shrine of Interest.

When a young Gentleman engages in large Commercial plans, talks of Entering the army, I am at a loss what he means. Was he in Earnest, doubtless some place of Rank might be procured. Success in another line Depends on so many circumstances that it is at present more uncertain.

Your letters of February 24 & 28th and March 4th[?] Received the Last of May. Relieved my mind from the greatest anxiety. I at times apprehended Everything I feared, the Enemy, the sea-sickness, & imprisonment, but above all the Dread influence of Vice cloathed in the specious Disguise of politeness & pleasure & Backed by the Example of the most splendid & Brilliant characters.—But I am happy to find by the Narration of a beloved son has Escaped the first. By his stile & sentiment I trust He will

never be Endangered from the Last. Yet beware of the smiles of Beauty & the Deceptive Allurements of Female art where Gallantry is the spontaneous Groth[3] of the soil & Intrigue the great Bussiness of Life. Reserve your Vigour, your affections, yourself, for some Lovly Woman worthy of Every Attention who will Bless by a Mutual Attachment & smooth the Craggy Vale we tread which spite of the promisses of Fortune obliges to Recollect that Felicity unmixed is not made for Man until he has filled his post with Dignity & been taught to smile at the pain of Disappointment which can Last but for an Hour.

Your Father writes you Everything Relative to Bussiness & the present politicks of this country Require the investigation of stronger optics than mine. I shall confine my pen to the Domestic circle. The Family Reside at Milton Hill this Winter and perhaps Longer. It is a pleasant spot and Health & contentment Brightens Every countenance, Except a little glaring[?] at times on the Brow of one who has suffered much in the public service. But as he sustained the action with a Bravery that did him Honour, he Bears his Misfortune with Becoming Fortitude, though by the Amputation of a Limb he is made a cripple in the Vigour of Life.[4]

Charles pursues his studies at the university with industry & sobriety & I hope if his life is spared,[5] science will Never Blush for her son. Henry is the same amiable, active, obliging youth that you knew him to be at Plimouth. His Father Designs him for the Mercantile Line. George studies Geography, History, & but Notwithstanding the pleasure he takes in his delightful Apartment amidst his Globes & his problems, he sometimes Discovers an Inclination to Ramble with Brother W—w. Yet we should be all happy in your speedy return if consistent with your Interest & Nothing checks the Fond Wishes of the Mother but the hopes that time may Lessen the Dangers of the Voyage, as it certainly will if peace should be Restored to the Contending Nations.

My inclination Leads me to touch on many subjects I am obliged to omit Least a too Long use of my pen on my first Exertion after Long weakness should prevent me in Future Conversing with a son who possesses a Large portion of the affections of His tender
Mother & Most Faithful Friend
M Warren

MWP2, RC

1. Benjamin Franklin, with whom WW had certain dealings in Europe.

2. During his confinement in London, WW met with the British secretary of state Lord Hillsborough as part of his interrogation.

3. I.e., growth.

4. Young JW2 was seriously injured in the right knee in a naval engagement with British sloops of war aboard *Alliance*, now captained by John Barry, on May 28, 1781, resulting in the amputation of a leg. This loss of limb coupled with a previous predilection for depression seems to have confined him to a narrow compass for many years, but he later taught school in Hingham, served as postmaster in Plymouth, and faithfully assisted his mother with her writing in the last years of her life.

5. Charles Warren suffered from tuberculosis but took his degree from Harvard in 1782.

61 TO WINSLOW WARREN

[After staying in Holland for several months in spring and summer of 1781, WW traveled to Paris in July where he met with JA and dined with Benjamin Franklin. Still at least nominally intending to set up in trade, WW sought loans from the Franklin family via Benjamin's grandson, William Temple Franklin, traveled some more in France, then settled in Nantes for a period of about ten months—where he was when MOW wrote the following letter. Meanwhile, at home, the Revolutionary War was coming to an end with the American victory at Yorktown in October 1781.]

Milton March 24 1782

It is now more than five Months since the Date of your last. But as there have been no late arrivals, I quiet my fears and bid my throbing Heart be still in hopes some favourable Gale will soon waft agreable Tidings from my son. A son whose Birth I this day commemorate not with Festivity & song, but with the sober gratitude due to a Being who has Conferred on me years of Felicity & who still continues an amiable Family unbroken. Yet every hour reminds me by what a slender Tennure[?] I hold & while I contemplate you at too great a distance to receive the aids of Maternal Tenderness, though your situation required it, & my wish would fly to your assistance. I am checked by the pale Countenance & declining Health of

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some of your Brothers and admonished that though I hold them in my arms, I cannot parry the invaders shaft that cuts down the fairest form of sublunary Happiness.

Charles has been struggling Many Months with the simtoms of a disorder that frequently baffles the skill of the physition. He desires Life as a Man, that wish to act a Noble part on the stage & with that ardor which glows in the Bosom of youth, yet serenely waits the Decission of Heaven, and with a philosophic steadiness pursues the Methods providence points out for Recovery. Some of his complaints seem at present to have given way, and we hope much from a Journey He is about to take towards the Southern States.

When I behold the the [*sic*] Vivacity, Vigor, and chearfulness that sparkles in the Eye of my Harry, I often recollect that

> "A Blaze betokens Brevity of Life"[1]

and thence perhaps am the more Alarmed at the Languid Habit which has taken him off both from Books & from Bussiness for several weeks.

Nothing has sailed Directly for France since the Alliance, but hope your Father will have an opportunity soon of making you some Remittances. It has given him much concern that it could not have been done before. But it was not practicable.

Your friend Brush[2] will give you a better Idea of the situation of Bussiness in Boston than I can convey & perhaps before this reaches you, as he embarks in a few days for the W. Indies & from thence to France. He urges exceedingly that we send your brother George to his care if a good opportunity [??] in the Fall. He promisses to place him with Mr. De Noaile[3] in some respectable House in France or bestow every attention to bring him on to bussiness himself, as his friends shall choose. I wish to hear your opinion of the project before our final determination.

George is a clever fellow. I know not how to part with him. Yet shall deny myself & pursue whatever path appears most for his advantage.

The prosperity & Happiness of her children is the ultimatum of felicity to her, so long as the pulse of Life shall continue to beat in the Bosom of your affectionate Mamah,
Marcia Warren

MWP2, RC[4]

1. Edward Young, *The Complaint, or Night-Thoughts on Life, Death and Immortality* (London: J. and F. Rivington, 1773), Night 5, line 793.

2. Eliphalet Brush, a merchant of New York who made frequent transatlantic trips. Brush returned from Holland in September 1781 with dispatches from JA, then in Amsterdam. He must have met WW during the summer of 1781 while WW was also in Holland. Following his return from the voyage mentioned in this letter, he sailed for London in February 1784 and returned to New York from thence in April 1785. It seems likely that WW thought to ally his business interests with Brush, as his name appears several times in future letters, but nothing permanent came of his relations with the New Yorker.

3. The De Noailles family were French aristocrats, one of whom was a grandfather to the marquis de Lafayette. Which individual MOW means is not clear.

4. Note at top of Letterbook draft reads, "This is copied as it is be [??] by the author."

62 TO CATHERINE LIVINGSTON

Milton July 5th 1782

My dear Catharine

It is now many months since I had the pleasure of one line from a young lady I both love and esteem;—nor do I wonder at her silence, constious[?] I have no claims upon her pen;—at the same time, I can exculpate myself from any designed neglect. Civility would have dictated, had not friendship a much nobler stimulus urged a speedy return to your several very agreeable favours, but by many distressing circumstances I have been obliged long to lay aside my pen; I have been slow in resuming it, and partly from apprehension that long disuse had almost incapacitated me from giving pleasure to my friends, and if you find it confirmed by the attempt, I had rather be told so by you, than convinced of the truth by future silence.

Will this find you on the banks of your *favourite Hudson*, or still engaged in the brilliant circles of pleasure amidst the noise and bustle of the City? if on the first named happy spot I shall have from you the soft overflowing of a feeling heart, and the delicate sensations of a friendly bosom, interspersed with reflections on the gay scenes of the past year, and perhaps contrasted with your ideas of the pains, the fears, and the distresses of your friend through the rapid flight of eight or ten months, that she stood waiting with weakened abilities the decisions of time. But if you yet reside in the meridian of taste where the pageantry of pomp swells the

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pride of nobles, and the characteristics of a court, that has past its minority, daily appears;—surely the *tow* of the honest [??] must give you an ample field to expatiate in;—therefore take up your pen, my dear girl, delineate the manners, discuss the politics, sketch the reigning characters both in the busy and in the fashionable world. I love your descriptions and will leave you the choice of your own subject, only be assured I prize my correspondent as highly as ever;—I have found only one disagreeable thing in any of her letters; and has she resolved to come to Boston no more? I will not believe it;—particular circumstances influence our opinions—little alterations lead to a new determination; of consequence I hope you will retract, and finding no bar in your way will decide in favour of a visit to us the next winter;—but I shall be disappointed if like your good sister, you suffer the Capital to engross the whole of your time;—Milton-hill is the residence of still, reflective, sober joys, and no one can be long happy here who is not contented with the quiet pleasures of domestic life, heightened by the variegated beauties which the face of nature displays, while her luxuriant hand, through all the changing scenes, is busily employed in the exhibition of objects to allure attention, admiration and gratitude.

I feel myself disposed to draw a parallel between the pleasures becoming a rational creature, and the illusive phantoms we too generally pursue; but this has so often been done, that it wants the charm of novelty[?] to recommend it even from the most masterly hand; besides I ever wish to shun the common error of gray-hairs,—nor suffer the solemn moralizing of age and experience, to cloud the innocent vivacity or damp the amiable cheerfulness of a young life. May you my dear meet with nothing to ruffle the tranquillity of your morning or meridian sky, or prevent your securing a stock of fortitude against the graver season, when by the constitution of nature, our hopes wither, and the joys of time fall off. [*When*] that period arrives, may you continue to gladden each circle with the smile of affability and may the dignity of virtue, crown your closing scene,—With the truest regard subscribe your very affectionate friend—
M Warren

MWP1

63 TO JANET LIVINGSTON MONTGOMERY

[Janet Montgomery appears to have come to Massachusetts and seen MOW in the spring of 1782, or late winter, when the weather was bad, and stayed only a short time with MOW. Although she expresses a desire to see the Hudson, MOW must have felt too bound to eastern Massachusetts, for health or family reasons, to reciprocate. She would be prophetic in that it appears there was no further live contact between the two before the correspondence broke off ten years hence.]

Milton October 1782

My dear Madam,

I am sensible a letter begun with an apology looks too like a conscious neglect, yet a total silence on the subject is not always justifiable. I therefore must tell you except to a long absent son, I have wrote very little since I directed to my much esteemed friend at the manor. Many avocations in the domestic walk have occupied my time since I had the pleasure of conversing with you, besides an unceasing attention to the languid lip of an amiable youth threatened with early dissolution;—and shall I tell you such has been my own low state of health for some months past, as to alarm my friends with apprehensions of irrecoverable decline. I would not tell you this, nor indeed could I were I not much recovered.

I was happy to hear that after the dangers and fatigues of your northern excursion you was so soon able to begin a new rout, and arrived timely to join the general gratulations America has lately exhibited, not only as a compliment to the Monarch of France but as a testimony of friendship to our first *allies* since we ranked among the nations. But while the *feu de Joye*[1] ascends to heaven, and the general acclaim advances[?] the birth of a state[?] you and I my dear madam, who have seen the instability of all human affairs may pray that the infant may never become the Tyrant, nor the feelings of the man be lost in the splendour of the potentate.

I returned a few days since from a short journey in pursuit of health and propose setting out again very soon;—I wish it was in my power to extend my tour to the north river,[2] am persuaded it would be attended with accumulated advantages to myself:—but alas!—It is too far from Miltons lull.

I cannot traverse the beautiful banks of the Hudson, nor follow the meanders of that noble stream;—both duty and inclination confine me near[?] the residence of a family who make the far greater part of my felicity.

Were it not for this one circumstance I should not hesitate, I should not fear the dangers, nor regret the fatigues of rambling over the mountains and forests till I reached the hospitable mansion of your excellent mother.[3] There indeed I should stop before I went farther in search of the genuine pleasures that flow from the bosom of unfeigned friendship, and by yours and her social fireside we would forget the amusements and follies of the gayer world and taste only the feast of reason. I feel no abatement of that flow of soul that burns in the bosom of friendship and is the genuine off spring of a heart warmed with those feelings of affection which are but enkindled here, and which I hope will be strengthened and enlarged in a more perfect state of existence forever brightening beneath the font of perfection.

I never expressed the one half of my disappointment in not having more of your company at my own little pleasant villa, and the pain is greatly enhanced by the idea you held up in your last that you had bidden us adieu forever. Retract that resolution my dear madam and try it in a happier season; in the bloom of spring the top of Tremont displays every thing beautiful that the face of nature can exhibit. The balmy breath of morning excites a rapture in a grateful heart, and the sweet melody of the innocent warblers of the grove might awaken devotion even in the soul of a sceptick. Come let us view the glittering canopy in the evening—how much does it surpass the splendor of the drawing room! and in the morning we will look up to the ethereal fane—the magnificent temple of worshiping angels.

I thank you madam for the traits of resemblance given me of a hero whose character I revere.[4] I shall deposit it among the treasures sacred to friendship and whenever I survey it will wish every felicity to his mourning partner.

Where is my dear Miss Livingston, is she still a resident in the city amidst a variety of brilliant personages and the whirl of amusements that may have erased the memory of a friend long unable to call upon her. But if she is again returned to rural life, to her favourite Hudson, where she will sometimes recollect the eastern hemisphere, tell her the season is gay

and the life in vogue shines in all the lustre the climate will admit;—concerts, balls, water-parties, and routs at least four times a week. If this is not sufficient temptation to look this way, what weight in the scale will the still quiet reception, the warm welcome of a friendly heart by the unvariegated fire-side at Milton, have in the bosom of a young lady formed to adorn the publick circle, to tread the round of courtly life, and shine in the meridian of taste? Tell her to take up her pen and discuss the politicks, delineate the manners, give us the reigning characters both in the busy and in the fashionable world. I love her descriptions and leave the choice of subject to herself, only let her be assured her correspondence is prized by your friend
M. Warren

MWP1

1. Feu de joie, a French expression for a gun salute in celebration of something (literally "fire of joy").

2. North River is another name for the Hudson.

3. Margaret Beekman Livingston, widow of Robert R. Livingston of Clermont.

4. This probably refers to a miniature of Richard Montgomery that was mentioned in an earlier letter.

64 TO WINSLOW WARREN

Milton Nov 24 1782

The Argo is not yet arrived. By the Alexander we had one short scrip from my son (Dated Paris). Has pleasure or Bussiness led you there? This inquiry rises not from the Curiosity of a Woman. It is prompted by the tender, prudent solicitude of an affectionate Mother. Nor will my Attention diminish so long as Reflection is lent me, & I am able to form a Wish for the Happiness of my Children. And not withstanding two or three years travil may have ripened your judgment & Experience taught you in some degree what life is. Yet the Ideas of Danger will present themselves before me & you must expect the Maternal precept will follow you so long as you reside in a country when Refinement has Eradicated Virtue and Literature flourishes without principles, & Erudition serves but to embelish Vice, when you daily meet politeness without sincerity & civility without

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64 TO WINSLOW WARREN

Milton Nov 24 1782

The Argo is not yet arrived. By the Alexander we had one short scrip from my son (Dated Paris). Has pleasure or Bussiness led you there? This inquiry rises not from the Curiosity of a Woman. It is prompted by the tender, prudent solicitude of an affectionate Mother. Nor will my Attention diminish so long as Reflection is lent me, & I am able to form a Wish for the Happiness of my Children. And not withstanding two or three years travil may have ripened your judgment & Experience taught you in some degree what life is. Yet the Ideas of Danger will present themselves before me & you must expect the Maternal precept will follow you so long as you reside in a country when Refinement has Eradicated Virtue and Literature flourishes without principles, & Erudition serves but to embelish Vice, when you daily meet politeness without sincerity & civility without

Friendship, when you must constantly call in reason to parry the poisonous shafts of Wit employed to ridicule, & your philosophy to resist the[?] more facinating arts of Beauty which too often melt away all that is sterling in the soul.

These sentiments have been often repeated & perhaps nearly in the same expression, for it is the Language of my Heart, & that ever guides my pen, & thus it almost mechanically tells you I most ardently wish to see you.—I hope your long absence from your Native Country will advance your Fortune; if you are prudent & not remarkably unsuccessful undoubtedly it will. But this is not a first Consideration with me. You must let me tell you, in the Words of another to a young Nobleman his friend, "In short, my Dear W—w, I love you too well to think of spending a whole Eternity without you."

I love you as my son. I esteem you as my *Friend* and I wish ever to respect you as an Honour to your country & an ornament to Human Nature. If you are not it will not be my Fault, nor yet the Fault of Nature. You have a Mind formed for enterprize & a Genius that leads you to consider everything on a Broad Base. I have marked you from the early period of childhood as an admirer of the Great, the Noble & sublime. Therefore never counteract the Native dictates of a generous Heart by submiting to any action tinctured with meanness. This may be done by a steady Method of circumscribing your Expences within the Bounds of your income.—and while you struggle for Distinction, By cherishing that noble ambition which dignifys the rational creature, extend your views beyond the Narrow limits of Fame that you may not only rank with those Models of Virtue & Heroism which have been so much your admiration but be able to stand with confidence before Him who Disemminates character not according to the weak decissions of Man but by the unering scale of Eternal Truth. How contemptable in such an Eye is what is called the *point of Honour*—the Disputes of the gambling Table—the pursuits of Lawless Ambition & the low pleasures of the Man of Taste, even if Fortune lends her favourable Gales to waft him down the Tide of Voluptuous Enjoyment.

It has been observed that commerce has a tendency to narrow the mind, but I do not think the observation just, except with the little Traficer[1] who aims only at accumulation without a Wish to benefit society. The Merchant may enlarge the bounds of Intercourse, he may spread knowlede,

may widen the Avenues of useful improvment, may encourage industry & rank himself among the first class of Benefactors to his country—

How few of the celebrated statesmen of former ages have done this, & how much more seldom have the polititions of our own times had any object in view but the agrandizment of an individual or a Family who but from a lucky Coincidence of Events might ever have remained in that obscurity which might have saved them from Hatered & Contempt.

You will perhaps see by the public papers that a circumstance of little Moment has been the accidental cause of introducing your Name among the party scriblers at Boston, but you have not suffered therby. It has rather created you Friends, wherever it has been read, & the Gentleman whose Favour you wrote daily gains ground in spite of the industrious Malice of his enemies.

Your parents lately returned from a Visit to our truly valuable friend Mr. Gerry.[2] He showed me an excellent Letter from you. It breathed the Feelings of a warm Attachment to your Native Country replete with sentiments of the purest Virtue & a Detestation of a vitious character, though cloathed in all the gaudy trapings of succesful vilany.—He wrote you by the *Thorn* & by some other conveyance, & your correspondent wishes the Cultivation of Friendship with a young gentleman he greatly esteems & who I trust on a personal acquaintance will strengthen the bands of affection & Respect.

Your Father is not suffered agreable to the Wishes of himself & family to continue in the path of private life. He has had but a few Months respite from public Bussiness. He is again reelected a Member of Congress. It is not agreable to us who are so fond of the quiet & rational pleasures of Domestic Life. But as he has long served his Country in many important offices & sighs for Retirment, but as he has refused so many Honary employments & the critical experiences of the present day require the aid of every Veteran in the public Walks, he thinks it his duty to engage again.[3] He is now at plimmoth & may not return soon enough to write by this opportunity, but be assured his affectionate regards accompany those of your Mother,

M Warren

MWP2, RC

1. I.e., trafficker.

2. Elbridge Gerry, Massachusetts politician and fast friend of the Warrens.

3. However much he thought it his duty, JW, although elected to the Continental Congress, did not attend and resigned.

65 TO JOHN ADAMS

Milton Tremont December 18th 1782

My Dear Sir,

All America are sighing for peace, but the hope is checked, though not extinguished, by the relief of Gibraltar.[1] Yet some of the Nobility of France think that Teritry in very good hands, & most Americans are willing it should remain where it is, requiring the [??] as it may retard a general accomodation.

Yet many of our polititians & more distinguished patriots apprehend that had it taken place in consequence of the late negotiations, the Counsels of a certain powerful court should have had too great an influance for the Interest & Happiness of this country.

Much Gratulation is certainly due to France for their early & spirited Exertions in our favour, but as we have shaken off the yoke of dependance on one foreign power, we ought ever to hold ourselves independant of all others.

Neither are weakness [??] or our complasance should suffer us to listen to the Intrigues, to be awed by the Threats, or led by the Dictates of Ministerial Authority, though he pleads with ever so much Address the Merits of his Master or the obligations due to the people he Represents. But as the Americans in general have lost sight of their object and Congress have in some Measure out Lived their Dignity, & Vested[?] more of their power in the hands of artful & avoritious men, it may be long before we see a [??] equal systematical Administration of Government. This people are marked with character too distinct for unison. We talk high of the Excellency of the Republican system & our legislations are established on the liberal plan, while in principles, in Manners, in Taste, in Fashion, we are intirely Monarchic. The consequences of this Absurdity appear at once in the want of consistency & Decission in Design & uniformity & Vigour in the execution, through the higher departments as well as in that

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sincerity[?] of mind, that insolence of imagined Independance which has nearly destroyed the proper Ideas of subordination, Decency, & civility among the lower classes. The truth is so far has this country deviated from the principles, manners, & spirits that instigated an oppotition to Britain & so dazzled with the splendor of courts, the parade of armies, the pride & pomp of War, the soft indulgences of sudden affluance & the reigning Taste for luxurious & expensive pleasures, that they are prepared to ask a king, Though a voice from Heaven denounced as to the ungratful Israelites that their sons[?] should [??] before his Chariots.

You have doubtless seen by the American papers that there has been a project for a tax through the Continent by an impost[?] of five pr ct on all articles of commerce, this to be payed by the importer on the arival of his goods.

Congress, or rather a Financier whose Mandates are in the style of regal Authority, were to receive this as a permanent revenue to be appropriated by Congress without controul or inquiry forever. But this Requitition could not be in force till each Legislature had made it their own act. By sophistry, Illussion, & the ready Arts of Men who have lucrative offices to Bestow, there has been Little Difficulty to obtain a compliance except from the small state of R Island who had the Honour to stand alone in oppotition till most of the other states began to see the [??] of Evils that would have followed in Consequence of such an ungaurded step. Thus we often see Relief spring from a quarter where it was least expected.

The Virtues of a Cato could not save Rome, nor the abilities of Padilla defend the Citizens of Castile from sinking under the hand of Tyranny. Yet later times have shown us a *Tell* who rose suddenly from obscurity & boldly rescued the Liberties of his Country.[2]—But as the Conduct of Mankind in all ages depends much on the character and genius of their Leaders, these may yet appear in America some who have capacity enough to form the Manners of the people & Virtue enough to save his Contemporaries from irretreviable Ruin in consequence of the inexperience, the Weakness, the Extravagance, the Venallity, & [??] complasance of his predecessors. But the political stars, either in the southern or more Northern Hemisphere do not at present augur such an happy Revolution in favour of purer morals or more energetic government.

The Massachusets are under a cloud which almost obscures the scale of probaty & perhaps it may be long before it dissipates. Yet the popularity

of their idol of *Straw*[3] is manifestly in the Wane. His obstinacy & caprice create Disgust while his Vanity, Ignorance, & Incapacity to hold the Reins of Government with Dignity render him contemptible. Yet the influence of his artizans divide the Capital & sow Disunion among the people & the want of some decided character who commands the Voice of the Multitudes who never reason, of the Vulgar who never act but as the Instruments of Artful[?] men may give him a chance for another Election.

There are only two gentlemen who are candidates, in oppotition: Mr. B—n[4] is unpopular and rendered more so by his Enemies on account of M Temple whom they persecute with unceasing Virulence & injustice. It is said Gl Warren has too much Austerity of Manners for the times & too little Fondness for the Glare[?] of office to accept it. But unless their is a fairer prospect of conducting the shattered Bark safely into port, He trusts no popularity, He seeks no place but determines to live independant and die still[?] in witness of his own conscience that he has done all in his power to secure the Blessing to posterity.

Since I write you by a ship from Salem, he has determined to resign a seat in Congress for many solid Reasons which I cannot at present transmit. Thus I have complied with your Request & given a short sketch of the political situation of your Country. But it is a Field too wide, an object of too great Magnitude for my pen, yet if it will be any gratification to my dear son, he may have some Future strictures from his affectionate
M Warren

MWP2, draft

1. MOW refers to the French siege of the British possession Gibraltar, at the tip of the Iberian Peninsula, in September 1782, which failed to bring about a British surrender.

2. The Roman republican Cato the Younger, the Spanish republican Juan de Padilla, and the Swiss republican William Tell, respectively. MOW was reading *The History of the Reign of Charles V* by William Robertson (London: W. and W. Strahan, 1769; Philadelphia: R. Bell, 1771) and would use that book in constructing the character of Padilla in her verse drama *The Ladies of Castile*.

3. John Hancock, now governor of Massachusetts.

4. James Bowdoin, one of Hancock's chief rivals.

66 TO JOHN ADAMS

Milton [May?] 1783

Did the Minister at the Hague recieve a letter under the signature of Marcia[1] before he left that country and repaired to France? If the cold phlegmatic Dutchman, more honest than polite—has received and thus delayed a return, I hope the influence of a milder climate may soften to condescention, and that the refinement and elegance of Versailles and Paris will remind him, that it is unpardonable thus to neglect the *etiquette* which every lady claims as her due. I shall expect an apology by the next arrival, and as eagerly peep into the packages from France as some others have inspected letters directed to the plenipo's from America.

Do you Sir, think of retireing and settling down quietly to enjoy the sweets of private life? No never—you was not made for that purpose:—so long as the capacity for serving your country is continued,—it is and must be your lot to tread the bold and craggy path of politics—to counteract the intrigues of Statesmen and Princes—perhaps to settle the boundaries of nations and mark the time of Empire;—and what is still more difficult to achieve, to convince mankind it is their duty to maintain the freedom they have acquired by their blood and their treasures;—to convince them that probity is the road to honour—and that a people devoid of public and private virtues, cannot be long happy, great, or free, by the exertions of only a few of the best and wisest of their citizens.

Yet the example of one good man unawed by threats, uncorrupted by gold, and unmoved by the machinations and refinements of systematical villainy, may be more influential in keeping alive the respect due to virtue, than the best digested code of moral instructions. Judiciary restraints on the depravity of man will ever be necessary;—but the legislator who lives up to the institutions he approves more surely guards the laws, by the dignity and uniformity of his conduct, than by the severest penal inflictions.

What a many headed monster would it appear, should we see a republic grafted on the principles of monarchy? The slips might thrive but the fruit must be despotism.

I feel myself disposed to make observations on various subjects that pass before us, but the magnitude as well as the multiplicity of objects that demand your time leave little room for the interludes of common life.

I sometime since hinted at the political manoeuvers and the state of parties in this country; since which Mr H——— is again elected the nominal governor of the Massachusetts—he can never be more—he has not the strength either of body or mind for the execution of the office with honour to himself or his country,—and had he the abilities and the virtues necessary to hold the reins with precision or dignity, his caprice would blast his administration.[2]

A fortunate coincidence of circumstances has established his popularity, and hung such a veil before the eyes of the vulgar, that nothing less than the convulsions of an Earthquake can rend it in sunder; yet the reputation of this Idol of straw has lately been in the wane; his obstinacy, vanity, levity, and ostentation, have created disgust and rendered him contemptible in the eyes of the soberer part of the community; but his partizans have influence enough to divide the Capital: to spread dissention among the people, and prejudice against the firmest patriots in the State.

Thus for want of some other center of union, some decided character to command the fickle voice of the multitude who never reason, of the vulgar who never act, but as the instrument of artful men, he secures a reelection from year to year, and probably fixed in the chair for life.

When you are ordered to the Court of Great Britain you shall again hear from your humble servant
M Warren.

MWP1

1. MOW's pen name; see note 2 to L 24 (to JW).
2. Another MOW slap at John Hancock, distrusted also by JA.

67 TO WINSLOW WARREN

Milton May 4 1783

Expectation is almost worn down & hope ready to give place to fears of the most alarming Nature. Six long months & not a line from a son whose filial attention used to watch all opportunities of communication.

I this day transiently heard you was gone to *Montpelier*.[1] It called up a sigh from the Bottom of a most affectionate Heart, accompanyed with the instant Recollection that the nearer we approach the sun[?] the more

I sometime since hinted at the political manoeuvers and the state of parties in this country; since which Mr H——— is again elected the nominal governor of the Massachusetts—he can never be more—he has not the strength either of body or mind for the execution of the office with honour to himself or his country,—and had he the abilities and the virtues necessary to hold the reins with precision or dignity, his caprice would blast his administration.[2]

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familier we become with Vices of every kind. What judicious, experienced, virtuous friend have you chosen for a companion in this dangerous rout?

A traviller, a writer of some fame has observed that in the south of France & Italy sins of the blackest dye are not only commited with impunity but boasted of with Audacity, & that it was next impossible for a young Man to escape the sharpers, the gamblers, the abandoned of both sexes—& that he could not enjoy an hour's Contentment while a son of his was making what is called the tour of Europe. If such were the feelings of a Man of stronger Nerves & bolder advances to the Threshold of Criminallity, judge what must be the agitations of a more tender Bosom. They are too inexpressible for Language to utter, & my pen can only communicate that every hour wafts me to some place where you may possibly reside. The innocent pleasures you may enjoy, the advantages you may reap, or the evils that may overtake you, alternatly crowd on a mind never forgetful of your Honour & Happiness, & when the evening carrys you in my arms to the Throne[2] of Heaven, & my lids are closed on the pillow of rest, Imagination presents you before me in a thousand Vicissitudes, & the Dawn awakes me to inquire if my Winslow is safe.

Not a sail in sight[3] but my eager eyes look out & my heart beats in unison with a Family of amiable sons whose Mornings wishes are that this day may bring tidings agreable from an absent Brother.

I have lately wrote via Philadelphia & by a ship bound for England. I cannot form a conjecture where this or those will find you, but if in possession of Health & peace of Mind, the Consequence of Temperance, Moderation, & Integrity, I shall be happy. Fortune is a secondary consideration & Industry & oeconomy will always acquire a sufficiency.

The letters enclosed for Mr. Adams you will keep if you find he has embarked for America. I suppose you know he forwarded a resignation of all his employments which Congress received in February.

I could have wished you had been with him during your Residence in Europe.

I suppose Mr Watson[?][4] will deliver this who is gone by his brother's Request to enter on Bussiness in England.

Yours, yours, affectionately,

M Warren

MWP2, RC

1. In the south of France. WW had been in nearby Marseilles in February 1783, but by the time of this letter was about to arrive back in the United States, stopping first in Philadelphia to solicit Congress for a government post. See the following letter.

2. "Throne" is written in another hand above a crossed-out word.

3. There is a crossed-out word and "leaves" written above, but neither seems required by the context.

4. She probably refers to Elkanah Watson of Plymouth, who developed a fairly successful business in trade.

68 TO WINSLOW WARREN

May 19 1783

And is my son—my dear Winslow, again on the same continent with myself? Words cannot express the joy—the gratitude—the tenderness that pervaded my bosom when the tidings reached my ears.

Let me stop—and adore that Being who has preserved your health and that has gaurded you through such a variety of dangers—and has brought you back to your native country. The same kind providence I trust will indulge me soon to fold in my arms my amiable son, my judicious friend, for whom I have waked and watched through many a weary night since the last dark evening we spent together in new Boston square, on the 19th of May, 1780, when the Hemisphere was shrouded in a remarkable darkness that has since employed the speculations of the philosophers without a satisfactory investigation of its cause.

It is three years this day since I bid you adieu, since which every evening has wafted a sigh to the shores of Europe, and every morning breathed a prayer for the safety of my son. My God has heard, has returned you, and I trust will make you all I wish. Your spirit, your enterprize, your perseverance, I admire: may heaven succeed your plans. So far as the unering eye of infinite wisdom sees they will promote your best felicity.

The circumstance you mention of struggling alone in a world of strangers has a thousand times pained me to the heart—and its poignancy has been increased by the inability to help it.

Your father's spirits, I think, are hurt by his indefatigable labours in the public cause. This is increased by his anxiety to bring forward with advantage a family of sons whose genius and manners flatter the fond expecta-

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tions of the parent. All that the best of fathers can, has, and will be done for each. But if after all, my dear son, you are obliged to push your way through life by dint of your own resolution, fortitude, and virtue, you will have a consolation that those can never feel who are the children of fortune and the favorites of courts.

How long is it to be before you design us a visit? I know not how to restrain my impatience to see you. Yet if a journey this way immediatly would materially injure your interest, I will a little longer suspend my wishes. I lay down my pen. I find myself too elate with expectation. I will not suppress it, yet I would check the ardent follies of hope, lest some intervening circumstance should interrupt or retard the happiness I expect from your return to the parental roof. Come on as soon as possible. You cannot wonder at the impatience of a tender father or of brothers whose fraternal bosoms glow with the ardour of friendship. I need say nothing of affectionate feelings that are inexpressible, and that can agitate only the bosom of the mother like your

M Warren

To Mr. Winslow Warren at philadelphia

MWP2, RC

69 TO ELIZABETH OTIS BROWN

[On May 23, 1783, MOW's brother, James Otis Jr., was killed by lightning, providing an incandescent end to a fiery figure of the early Revolution. For years, JO2 had been estranged from his wife and family, largely because of his mental illness but also because of politics. His daughter Elizabeth had married a British officer and left the country. Despite the gulf separating them—ocean and politics—MOW still reaches across by family tie to her overseas niece.]

Milton June 15th 1783

Mrs. E. Brown—

Since the Convulsions of war have broken in on the harmony of society and made such ravages on public & private happiness, how often have I

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Milton June 15th 1783

Mrs. E. Brown—

Since the Convulsions of war have broken in on the harmony of society and made such ravages on public & private happiness, how often have I

wish'd to call on my dear neice & convey a testimony of my strong affection safely into her hand.—The restoration of peace among the nations now gives us the glad Opportunity of cultivating and exercising the social affections which are the glory of human nature.—But my heart bleeds at the reflection that the first Intercourse must be accompanied with the painful detail of the sufferings & fall of a man whose genius & abilities display'd the Extent of human Capacity,—while the Veil that clouded those superior Intellects is a moral Lesson useful but humiliating to the pride of Science.—

You my dear Girl was too young to be appriz'd of the Necessity, though you cannot be insensible of the early exertions of your father in a Cause which dignifies his memory. He had sacrific'd his time, his fortune, his felicity at the shrine of freedom long before his daughter bid adieu to the American shore.—

Little has he enjoy'd & less has he desir'd life since the barbarous assassinating hand of Violence gave that irreparable wound which broke the energetic power of reason, & almost shook from the throne that distinguishing Characteristic of the human Soul.—Yet sensible he was incapacitated for the exercise of talents which had shone with peculiar Lustre both in the publick & private walks—and apprehensive he could no more be greatly useful to society,—he often invok'd the messenger of death to give him a sudden release from a Life become burdensome in every Sense but when the calm interval of a moment permitted him the recollection of his Integrity.—

Thus have we beheld the divine commission—the flaming car—which has wafted from the world one of the greatest yet most unhappy of men—

> "The Gods in anger saw the spot
> "On Earth to Otis given,
> "In thunder, as on Sinai's mount,
> "They snatch'd him back to Heav'n.—"[1]

His great soul was instantly set free (from a thraldom in which the Love of his country & of mankind had invok'd him) by a flash of Light'ning.—The Government of Omnipotence is inscrutable, yet the system is perfect—Confident of this we follow the maner of distinguish'd worth & drop the silent tear of friendship in the darksome tomb, while with wonder and

astonishment we adore the sovereign arbiter who suffers the sublime powers of the mind a transient dawn and then obscures by death or some more dread Calamity the genius too extensive to be circumscrib'd, and too big for Enjoyment in this limited sphere.—

While the pen of a sister, agitated by the tenderest feelings can scarcely touch the Out Lines, history will doubtless do justice to a character to whom America is more indebted for the investigation of her rights & the defence of her Liberties than perhaps to any other Individual.—It was the masterly precision of his pen, & the early & vigilant Exertion of his abilities that lay'd the foundation of a glorious Revolution, which will be recorded among the most interesting Event[s] in the Annals of time.—

And though Mr Otis died a martyr to his beloved Country, he saw her Independence secur'd—and truth will enroll his name among the first patriots that have expir'd on the "blood-stain'd theatre of human action."—[2]

His amiable Daughter, born to more brilliant prospects, weeps with resign'd dignity her disappointed Expectations.—Her chearful & filial attention was the only Comfort of a distress'd father;—the same Virtues are still the solace of a mother broken by age, infirmity & affliction.—

Your Friends on this side the Atlantick know very little of your situation;—but from the character & conduct of Mr Brown while he resided in Boston we are led to suppose you are happily connected.—I trust the Qualifications that make him an excellent husband are strengthen'd by the nobler feelings of generosity to a young Lady who left her Country & Connexions, & cast herself intirely on the protection & tenderness of a Stranger.—

If Heaven has bestow'd (I hope you my dear Betsy will not fail in the most unremiting attention to mind, & retain the affections of) a worthy partner, & that your Condescention as well as every other female Virtue will conspicuously crown his domestick felicity.—If you have a kind husband, an agreeable residence, a decent Competency and promising children—You have all the world can bestow;—an accumulation of fortune might gratify, but it cannot bestow happiness unless the mind is dispos'd to receive it in more moderate circumstances.—Oftentimes the Passions are heighten'd by the means of Gratification and the highest affluence produces the most complicated misery.—

If you are less happy than you thought you had or might to expect, perhaps your Expectations were too sanguine—If you enjoy more felicity

that falls to the common lot of Life I hope your Gratitude is proportionably excited.—On the summit of prosperity may you maintain your Candour, affability & readiness to oblige—at the same time support your own dignity & chearfulness, whatever adverse Circumstances you may meet while struggling on a Scene where if we act our part well we shall behold them as necessary Contingencies in the uniform plan of Government which has the happiness of a Universe in View.

The description you have given of the good lady [??] Mr. Brown's mother, has won my warm affection;—I love her from the double motive of Esteem for the many Virtues that adorn her Character & for her tenderness to my neice—with my most affectionate Compliments, ask her to write & tell me if Betsy is a good Girl—if she adorns the Conjugal State, & does honour to her Country & Friends;—such is her Understanding & Education that I think the answer must be in the Affirmative.—

Tell Mr Brown when his inclination & circumstances coincide to make it Convenient to re-visit the western hemisphere he will find many friends to bid him welcome, but none with more sincerity than his & your affectionate aunt.—
[no signature]

Pilgrim Society, draft

1. Attributed by MOW to Samuel Cooper, JQ2's classmate at Harvard. See *History of the Rise, Progress, and Termination of the American Revolution* (Boston: Larkin, 1805), 1:89.

2. This phrase appears in an epitaph for John Bradshaw, allegedly authored by Benjamin Franklin, which first appeared in the *Pennsylvania Evening Post*, December 14, 1775, and was reprinted in other newspapers, including the *Boston Evening-Post* of August 23, 1783. The context for the lines is a challenge to British authority over the colonies and a call to resistance. Charles I's execution, says Franklin, was "[t]he most glorious example / Of unshaken virtue, love of freedom, and impartial justice, / Ever exhibited on the blood-stained theatre of human actions."

70 TO ABIGAIL SMITH ADAMS

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daughter would sail to England, arriving in July 1784. Preceding them to Europe was WW, on his second voyage to that continent, who carried a letter from AA to JA. Now one of MOW's closest female friends and her most beloved son were overseas.]

Milton Hill April 24 1784

After long expecting that pleasure, I was gratifyed four days ago by the receipt of a letter from my friend Mrs. Adams. I have so long answered in the negative when in all companies, the question has been asked, what *no letters from your particular friend*, that I have been obliged to make many apologies for your silence to prevent some unfavourable construction.

I find by yours that you are not yet an European lady, that the splendour of a court does not yet obliterate the undissembled pleasure of society in a private circle of *friends*. You seem to wish for the afternoon interviews of your country, which custom has rendered an agreable hour. I assure you we miss you much at the little *tea parties*. This is a pleasure invented by Frenchmen, yet perhaps it is as rational as rope dancing & puppet shows.

In the ramblings of the vissionary slumbers, I often visit the European shores. I have an interest there separate from my friend at *Autuil*. There I follow the footsteps of an amiable son, but I more frequently summon them all to the summit of Milton or the neighbouring hill. When I awake I wish to reallize the phantoms. Yet I acknowledge, I wish you here more for my own than for your sake. I think you must be exceedingly happy, though I believe more from your domestic than public connection. The affections of the former are strengthened by time, while the parade of the latter fatigues, and the glare of grandeur palls upon the eye, and after the novelty is worn off, it does not possess charms sufficient to wean us from the local attachments of early life.

I do not wonder you are pleased with the theatrical entertainments in a country where the refined and elegant compositions must improve the taste, while the lively representation of character and the exhibition of great historical events lay open a wide field of amusement to the reflecting mind. I think your situation must be peculiarly advantagous, as you can retire to the sequestered villa without any interruption of thought by the bustle of a croud, which often pushes away the most agreable images.

I expect your next will be dated from England. I dare say you will be very happy there, though that nation have not discovered either a wise or a

friendly dispotition towards the Americans in general since the conclusion of the peace. Yet that country in many respects may be more agreable to you than France. Perhaps a treaty of commerce between Great Britain & America may put the two countrys on a more agreable or a more amicable footing than they are at present. I believe it unfortunate that this was not done earlier.

I wish we were wise enough to render ourselves wholly independent of foreign nations, but the foolish passions of mankind will forever prevent.

You know it has long been my opinion that the human race were made for slaves, for in all ages, whatever advantages fortunes, valour, or virtue throw into our hands, they are generally bartered away for the gratification of vanity or the aggrandizement of a few individuals who have art enough to facinate the undistinguishing multitude. I fear the conduct of our country will stand upon record as a striking example of the truth of this observation. We have governments of our own framing, magistrates of our own electing, but without confidence in their abilities or energy, or tallents, on their part to acquire or secure it.

The Bostonians are wrangling with British factors, yet cuning mad for their commodities. The narrow scale of their politics is a contrast to the spirit of this people previous to the late hostilities.

But why do I touch on a political subject in a letter to a lady who has announced her determination to relinquish the theme? When I have told her I know of another, who most ardently wishes that neither she or her connexions had ever been engaged in the thorny path, I will ask pardon for introducing the subject.

It is doubtless best for man that he cannot look into the page of futurity. If he could, a kind of apathy might overspread the world that would be fatal to the exertions of the human mind. Yet few revolutions that take place are favourable either to the virtue or the happiness of mankind, and even in those singular instances where salutary effects have resulted to the public, most of the leading characters who early embarked in the struggle have been rendered miserable, either by the sacrifice of fortune & friends—to fickleness & ingratitude of their country, or the machinations of a few individuals who would never have been brought into consideration but from the convulsions of the time. This is not a trait peculiar to America, it is the story of Man: past ages bear testimony to its authenticity

and future events will convince the unbelieving. But I hope that neither you nor yours will ever realize it from painful experience.

I thank you for your friendly inquiry after my sons, and as you particularized all, I will take them in the same order.

The youngest is a very dilligent student under the tuition of Mr. Strong at Northhampton. Henry, I believe, is not too gay for his years. He enjoys tolerable health but thinks it necessary to get into bussiness in order to be thrifty either in purse or in flesh: he is at present at home waiting the return of his brother Charles from Cape Francois, where he has spent the winter with much advantage to his health.[1] If as we flatter ourselves, his recovery should be permanent, these two youths mean to take the mansion, the stores, &c at plimouth, there to go into bussiness together, as that decayed village begins again to hold up its head.

The unfortunate, wounded, worthy young officer thanks everyone who inquires after him and desires particular respects to Mr. & Mrs. Adams. There is yet another whom you have seen several months since I had that pleasure. But we hear often from Lisbon, where he means to reside, yet for a time, though with a preference to his native country, or rather an attachment unusual in a young gentleman who has lived so long in the European world. He loves both the people & the manners of America better than those of any other place. I hope none of my friends, either young or old, will stay long enough abroad to wean them from this native country, yet you will all find a remarkable change of manners when you return.

Are the ladies in Europe all gamblers, and the gentlemen pleased with the accomplishment? It is a new thing with us for any one who has any claim to character to go from the dining to the card table, and sit till near midnight, painfully agitated least she should rise with fewer guineas in her poket than when she set down. It is not many years time such a conduct would have been deemed almost unpardonably disgraceful in the heedless youth of the other sex.

Mr. Warren would like very well to take a view of the agricultural improvements in England, but thinks it rather too late for him to visit Europe. Yet he sometimes talks of an excurssion to Lisbon to spend a few weeks with a beloved son. This I consider as the suggestion of a fond moment that will never be executed.

I understand your son is coming to America. He will not, I presume, make himself a stranger at Milton house. We shall doubtless hear oftener

from you in England than when in France, and no one will be more gratified by this circumstance than
Your affectionate friend,
M Warren

MWP1

Milton Sept. 18 1784

Mrs. A. Adams

If I was really as culpable as I may appear to my friend, it would be proper to begin with an apology, but on her arrival in England, if not before, she must receive letters from me. I have no doubt they will find a welcome reception, even amidst the ettiquette of preparation for an introduction to *Majesty*, the hurry from scene to scene of brilliant amusements, new faces, and public lives, among which *you* may possibly glide for some time without finding a real *friend*.

The similarity of language & religion, of manners, and tastes, all lead to more extensive acquaintance and more intimate connexions in England than you could form in France. Two or three years in the style of life you are now in must certainly be replete with resources, both for pleasure & improvement to an observing eye. Yet I doubt whither you would be fond of spending the remainder of life in a court. After the novelty subsides, will not the glare of grandeur grow burdensome? Will not the mind [??] for the calm delight of quiet friendship & that internal simplicity that has formerly yeilded you a fruition, which if layed in the balance, may perhaps outweigh the splendor of equipage and the ceremonious interviews with royalty & nobility. Yet the human mind has a happy facility in accomodating itself to its situation except in a few clouded souls that can be contented in none.

Some might perhaps smile at these observations to Mrs. Adams and think it required very little philosophy to reconcile her to her lot. But one who has been long acquainted with her tastes, who knows her love of her country, and her domestic connextions and occupations, her early attachment to modes of life incompatible with the necessary gayeties of public appearances, need not apologize, when she supposes her to have enjoyed more real felicity in the little yellow parlour with the companions of her youth amidst a smiling paternal circle and a few select friends, than she has yet found in the assembly, the drawing room, or the antechamber of princes.

You madam, who have been blessed with a full share of what according to my ideas gives the highest zest to human life, and who had sense & virtue enough to relish it in the degree that nature designed, will tell me in your next whither more rational or exquisite pleasures than those are to be found in the *coterie* of the most distinguished fair or in the pallace of the most magnificent court—while I who have not such a wide field of observation as I might find by traveling through distant nations & climates, will dwell on the humble theme that lies before me.

Or if you will with me for a few minits view appearances through another medium, I will endeavour to entertain you with the *Grand* of *nature* which a most beautiful morning exhibits from the summit of *Tremont*. The thunders of the last night are hushed and the lightnings cease to blaze on the tops of the hills—the delightful showers have added fresh verdure to the variegated landscape—the air is sweetly perfumed from the store house of balsomes which the hand of nature kindly opens alike to the monarch & the peasant. In such a moment, when the eye is entertained with the burnished beauties the riseing sun displays—when we behold the meandering Rivilets chearfully call as if to meet his morning beams, and pour their offerings into the great Reservoir—when the mind annimated by the delightful imagery contemplates the great sower of its enjoyments, till the incense of gratitude is enkindled—perhaps in this state of being, human nature is not capable of mere sublime enjoyment.

The statsman & the polition, or the votaries to fashion & fortune, may smile at the vulgar pleasure and the stoic may stile it the capture of enthusiasm: but, my friend, at the court of St. James's, if I am not mistaken, have so much genuine[?] [??] philosophy that they never loose their taste for the *feast of reason* either in the occupations of bussiness or in the pleasures or lustre of the most dignified station?

Since the above, I have transiently heard that Mr Adams has had an audience, a pleasing reception from the king of England & others who were once the foes of America. I have seen your letter of june 24th to your sister, with a detail of the parade & of your presentation to the royal family.[2] Do not the ideas of human greatness dwindle at the near approach? Does not even the magnificence of king evince the imperfection, as well as the equallity of man—both in his abilities, his passions, & his happiness?

From the opinion we had formed of the Earl of Effingham, I am not at all surprized that the countess was the first lady of the court who paid her

compliments to the family of the American minister.[3] From his conduct through the war, this might be expected. It is reported that this nobleman is to be the first Ambassador from Britain to the United States. Perhaps no one would be more universally pleasing to America.

I forwarded a package last April by Capt. Sydes[?] under cover to Janeson[?] & Frazier. You might not have arrived in England when he arrived. Did you ever receive it? There was enclosed therein letters for Mr. Adams, for you, for my son in Lisbon.

Mr. Warren's complements accompany the regards of your friend,
M Warren

MWP2, draft

1. It is unclear whether George studied law or was preparing for Harvard while in Northampton, but he would eventually leave there to move to Maine, where he would spend the rest of his life in more rustic and less academic circumstances. The Strong family was prominent in the area. Charles, meanwhile, suffered considerably from his tuberculosis, occasioning comments in AA's letters to JA at this time about how close to death she thought he was. However, his sojourn at Cap-François in Saint-Domingue (present-day Haiti), undertaken in 1784, apparently revived him enough to survive one more year.

2. During this period, correspondents shared letters almost in the way that people forward e-mails today—sometimes with the same embarrassing results. Especially among women, letters circulated through multiple hands, sometimes copied and sent further afield. A number of MOW's letters survive in multiple hands as evidence of this wide circulation of manuscript even as print culture was beginning to dominate the world of public discourse.

3. JA had concluded his work as minister to the French government, following the signing of the Treaty of Paris and the end of the war. In 1785 he took up the post of ambassador to Great Britain. JA would have liked Effingham to serve as ambassador to the United States, but the British government did not appoint anyone to that position until 1791.

71 TO SARAH SEVER

[Sarah Sever (d. 1787), known affectionately as Sally, was MOW's niece and the daughter of William Sever, a classmate of JW's at Harvard, and JW's sister, Sarah Warren. The Severs lived in Kingston, Plymouth County.]

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Milton May 2 1784

My Dear Sally,

I yesterday received your friendly inquiries & least I should be prevented, I take up my pen this morning before I repair to public Worship (where I have not been since last Dec[?]) to make a reply. Your cousin, my amiable Charles, is & has been for ten or 12 days, remarkably better. He proposed yesterday after hearing yours to write you himself, but I thought he had better postpone the indulgence of his inclination to some future day. He loves & thanks you for all your attentions & wishes to see you. Flattering[?] disorder—it almost makes me hope against Reason—yet writing is impossible, yet the slow [??] of the hectic[1] Time![?] seldom fails of making its wish seen.

My Dear Winslow has been gone a week.[2] The day of his return looks distant indeed to me, who measure time on its Declivity very differently from those who are ascending on his Wind expanded broad with the gales of hope.

My Harry goes soon on a voyage, merely in pursuit of health. Heaven grant the Boon to the sprightly youth, & as he has the Dispotition, make him a Blessing to Mankind.

Presumtuous women—how dare I call them mine—I will endeavour to consider them as a precious Loan—which the author has a right to [??]—

You say nothing of Mamahs health, so conclude her well as usual. Wish she may be able to come to Milton, as I have little expectation of seing her any where else at least for some months.

Sally, why do you not come? You know your friends & your aunt are always gratifyed by your visits, but you don't believe I have special Reasons for wishing you to make me a visit.—indeed I have—I dare not tell you what, but you must come—shew this to your father & Mother. I charge you to do it & tell them if they do not convey you here very soon I shall not forgive them.

I urge this on no narrow, selfish Motive, but because I love my Sally & wish her Happiness with the warmth of an

Affectionate Friend

M Warren

Sunday 5 o clock p.m.

Charles has had a fine day for him. I left him now in the parlour with his papah. This you would think very extraordinary, feble as he is, had you seen him a fortnight ago when we had heard his voice only in a wisper when necessitated to speak at all.

I shall depend on seeing you in the course of this month. My love to your good parents. Tell them I must insist upon it. Nancy will be a good girl to promote it as I shan't love her so well as I have done.

MWP2

1. The word "hectic" was used to refer to consumption or tuberculosis during the eighteenth century.

2. WW has just sailed for Portugal on his seccond trip to Europe.

72 TO WINSLOW WARREN

Milton August 16 1784

The Friend may look anxiously out and the Mother may chide the Winds, but the philosopher must call in the aid of patience, & the chieftian wait till the combination of circumstance compleats his Wishes or the Destination of providence sees fit to deny them. This exordium at once convinces you that every signal is watched & every arrival feeds us with hopes of hearing from my son, my Friend, my beloved Winslow. It is certainly now time when we may reasonably expect some inteligence, & nothing would so much brighten the Faces of Tremont as to hear of your Health & prosperity.

I shall say little of our domestic affairs, as I flatter myself you will have all from your Brother Charles, who means to embark for the Western Islands & Lisbon in a few days in hopes of a full reestablishment of health. I think him almost too low for such an undertaking, yet dare not discourage him as he is persuaded he cannot live another Winter in this cold climate. What are the parental Feelings on this trying occasion, I leave to your imagination. Heaven bless you both is all I can say, & the[?] constant repetition of the fervant ejaculation, the [most?] I can do.

I have several times conversed with Mr. Russel relative to the prospect of Bussiness between Portugal & America. It is his opinion that Fish are

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I have several times conversed with Mr. Russel relative to the prospect of Bussiness between Portugal & America. It is his opinion that Fish are

this year too high for the Lisbon Market. He wishes you to write him on your arival in Lisbon. This gentleman was married the last Thursday to your amiable cousin Miss Sever.[1] I can say this will prove a very happy connexion. Your brother George is to go to N Hamton[?] in Nov. to persue his studies under the Direction of Mr. Strong.

I will be happy on his arival in Europe as the most ample encouragement is given by C[?] to the addresses of a young gentleman on this side the water. He brought his credentials here yesterday in his hand[?] and boasts his claim in every company & says[?] the parties were pleased. I know of no one who has an objection.

I dined a few days since with your friend P. Morton in company with the celebrated Mrs. Macauley.[2] The literary character of this Lady is known & admired. Her Deportment is pleasing, her manners & conversation agreable, & though her character has been traduced in England by the spirit of party, perhaps she has as few foibles & as many Virtues as comport with the condition of humanity in the imperfect state, & I feel myself disposed to cast a shade over the former & to view the latter in the most conspicuous light; but without exagerating either the one or the other, I think she has a great share of merit, both as a writer & a companion.

Miss A——y has left her papah. Suppose in the usual[?] stile the inquiry will be what is the Fortune of this fine girl. [??] among six of them.

The children of almost all the Refugees[3] are come in & undoubtedly will set down quietly among us. There are few who have wandered long in the European World who do not give America the preference. I hope to see my children [??] established at this advantageous spot before I bid adieu to Mortality.

M Warren

MWP2, RC

1. Sally Sever married Thomas Russell, a Boston merchant, in 1784.

2. MOW refers to Perez Morton, a Boston political figure, and Catharine Macaulay, recently married to a much younger man, William Graham, and currently on her American tour.

3. By "refugees" she means the children of Tories, who fled with their parents at the start of the war but have returned to claim family property and resettle in the United States after living in Canada, the West Indies, or Britain.

73 TO WINSLOW WARREN

Milton August 22 1784

My Dear Son,

You may easily suppose we were all exceedingly gratified by the perusal of yours of June 5th & 7th to your brother Harry. They came to hand yesterday. But your Father received none, & as he is not mentioned in Harrys we have no doubt his Letters may have miscarried.

By the same opportunity is received a Letter from 19,[1] by which the Former feels a new disappointment, more especially as the impertinence & influence of O is become unbearable to a Man of his independant spirit. He is at present in no bussiness, nor can he dispose of any part of his landed property which is indeed an unfortunate circumstance for 25, 26, 29, &c., &c. Somthing from France may be yet advantagous, but I would advise all my Friends to learn not to depend on the precarious Ebbings & Flowings of Fortune, but to make that their own of which the World can never rob them.

Before this can reach you, you will probably be fixed in Lisbon. May your prospect be agreable, but at present nothing goes from hence but in foreign Bottoms, a circumstance unfavorable to the Trade of America & painful to me on your account.

The vicious Interests of the several states, the Delay of commercial Treaties, & the complicated Designs the patriotic party had to surmount at annapolis prevented any consular appointments before the separation of Congress, though the arrangments were made for that purpose & the Name of WW the first on the List of candidates. H, who is now with us, has not the least doubt this point will be caryed in his favour when they meet again if W continues to wish it, which his Friends will conclude is the case unless they hear he has altered his Determinations. I find those appointments are an object with some who we should suppose had much more advantagous prospects & among others 15 is very strenuous for any port in Europe, but notwithstanding his great Fortune, may be influential. He has been explicitly told by some Members of Congress that a young gentleman abroad has a prior claim both in his own right, & in the Merit & the sufferings of his Family. But there are so many Wheels in the great political Machine, so many compromisorial adjustments, that I look on the

event of all those things as very uncertain. You recollect a person was sent to England the last Winter with the Ratification of the Treaty between the contending powers. He was a troublesome unprincipled tool of A.[2] that Congress could get rid of by no other means, another instance that the want of Merit (as the affairs of the World go) as frequently secures office & Fortune as the possession of Virtue. Yet miserable is the Man who barters this Inheritance for the acquititions of Life.

It is the opinion of even some of his Friends that A. is one of the most dangerous characters in the United States, but some late arrangments may break a system that aimed at nothing less than an *American Monarchy*, & an hereditary Nobility, & perhaps the World will be Astonished when they shall hear in some Future day that certain very popular characters have no averssion to the Ideas of sovereignty. The Cincinnati[3] are at present hush[?] and think it prudent to let the Badge of their Ambition dangle beneath the Vestment. But the first favourable Congress may discover them the formidable foes to the liberties of their country.

I must at present be in a situation a little mortifying. C at the head of the commission & the Nephew out of all Employment instead of being promoted to the Rank of an Embassadore. Thus precarious is the possession of Honour, more especially when it depends on the Voice of popular Bodys. H writes you every thing relative to commerce as far as comes within his knowledge or observation. The Merchants have been much alarmed at the large importations talked off, but some of the most capital of them begin to think they will fall far short of Expectations, & that those will be very fortunate who have a supply of British good six Months hence.

As you wish to know every circumstance that affects your acquaintance in this country, I must give you one piece of inteligence not a little painful to Q & Z. The Lady of Q [??] have a [??] indeed I am sorry for the young people of that Family.

24 August

Since those letters were began, your Brother Charles has been obliged to alter his Determination, which was immediately to embark for Lisbon. It is now uncertain to what part of Europe he will go, but a winter in the northern parts of America he thinks would be more than his feeble frame can grapple with—

Your Father will write you by the next opportunity. If they have not by some means been lost, you must have received several letters from here & three or four very full ones from your ever, ever
Affectionate Mother
M Warren

MWP2, RC

1. MOW and WW appear to have developed a secret code through which to refer to individuals in international correspondence, using numbers or single letters. With one or two exceptions, as indicated in notes to follow, the editors cannot positively identify who is meant by this sign system.

2. By "A" MOW may refer to Robert Morris, who served as the chief financial officer of the postwar government under the Articles of Confederation and to whom she took a strong dislike.

3. The Order of the Cincinnati, an organization of Revolutionary military officers whom radical republicans like the Warrens viewed as the first step toward the creation of an American aristocracy. Membership was elite and hereditary—thus the suspicion.

74 TO WINSLOW WARREN

Milton August 28 1784

My Dear Son,

I forward you a large packet by the Jacob and Antony, Capt. Wybrands commander.[1] If you receive it you will find a Manuscript which I have since reperused & find several Negligencies. A more critical eye will doubtless discover many faults. It would be strange if there were not, considering the disadvantages under which it was wrote. Let not your partiallity hury it into public View, but give [me] your opinion of the work first. I mean to prepare you a more correct copy if you think it will bear the public inspection. As to the Dedication, I think as a friend reading it is more properly a preface. I will find a short, concise one addused to some literary character, Mr. F[?] if you think proper, or any one else. G. Washington is not the Man, though private Friendship as well as public Esteem would be our inducement, but every poetess in America dedicates to him.[2]

I believe, & it is the opinion of some others among the rest, Mr. J[?] *Warren*, that the Sack of Rome abounds too much with similis[?], with

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mere[?] poetic Description & moral Observations at some times when passion ought to have its full play.[3]

Several vessels have arrived & no letters for Mamah. Hope[?] will come soon, I dare say, perhaps by a ship which passed the fair Tremont this Morning supposed to be Capt. Hallet. Charles embarks with Capt. Grinalda[?] next Saturday. He is really better, but dare not risk an American winter.

I suppose no one of the Family will write by this opportunity but myself, &[?] several more direct[?] are likely to present soon. I have a thousand things to say but prudence imposes silence with regard to many matters. I wish you to know C is a lyar that roars at the corner of every street. Yet he must roar on perhaps till his Hunger is appeased by a certain delicious Morsel, for which he has whet his appetite. Only some fortunate stroke should relieve 13 from his present Embarasments. But such is the World. A train of misfortunes frequently attend the virtuous, while Fortune sports away her Favours on the Worthless & Insolent.

Your letter by the Union Capt. Gardiner came to hand yesterday. Your prospects of bussiness is a circumstance pleasing to each one of the Family. We have every Reason to think it will increase from this quarter provided the anticommercial Regulations of our *wise* Legislature does not destroy all Trade in the Eastern states. From the late transactions, we are warrented to say they conduct without principle & not without system. Many suppose they must soon repeal their own act, and thus weaken the Energy of their own Government, both by their Blunders & by their Endeavours to extricate themselves from the Consequences.

Be gaurded, my son, in all your letters. There are many who lurk in secret to do mischief when we do not suspect. Rival ships in trade or in politics often create dangerous Enmities, & the Effects opperate more or less fatally according to the local Circumstances of the Country where we reside in the custom & manners of the people with whom we associate.

I rely much on your Discretion, Judgment, & Integrity, yet more on that providential arm which is able to lead you in safety to gaurd & bring you back to your tender friends, to your affectionate Mother,
M Warren

6 o clock p.m.

I had just closed my letter when the eldest son of 2 rode up to the door with his youngest sister who came hither to find an assylum from the afflictions at home, their father being obliged to seclude himself from his many creditors, some of them merciless enough. I have for some time been a little apprehensive of this melancholy event, though did not expect it take place so soon. The failure of T. with whom he was connected & his Misterious[?] importations from Britain have done this. I did not mention the Bankruptcy of T which took place last May because I would avoid naming any thing that should give you any pain. R has been paid her whole Fortune. The gentleman she maried took care to get it into his hands before she became his wife. When his sister will receive any part of hers is very uncertain though her Grandfathers estate is sponsable[?] for the payment J[?] attached in season[?] to the whole amount of her claim.

What a Reverse in one of the oldest & most respectable Families in eastern states. Their struggles for a Revolution that has emancipated their Country from slavery laid the Foundation of their Ruin while it has raised others to the summit of Fortune & Honour who had neither ability, Birth, or merit of any kind to build an Expectation that they should ever emerge from obscurity. But this country is at present in a situation of which you can scarcly have an Idea. No Man is able to pay his debts from the scarcity of Cash, and few Crediters are in a Capacity to wait. No bussiness can be done from the shackles laid upon Trade by imports. Excises are the greatest part of which sinks in the pockets of officers & the [??]. Men of real property cannot command it, nor scarcly raise sufficient from the best [??] Estates to defray their daily Expenses. In this situation you must think of 26, active, industrious & capable of any Bussiness. He is embarassed from his Fraternal engagements too much for his Health in peace. For himself he can do nothing. He has no Capital nor any one to help him. But if he could get clear of the Massachusets Bank (a plague to every one who has anything to do with it) & some other Engagements that you are acquainted with, his Reputation & dilligence would enable him to do very well soon. He has taken great pains to extricate himself from certain ingagements, but without Effort as no lands can be sold & other demands are unsettled[?] & at best precarious. Patience, patience & fortitude are the precepts he daily hears. Indeed he is very clever.

[no signature]

MWP2, RC

1. Wybrand's ship sailed a regular run to Lisbon. See *Massachusetts Centinel*, August 20, 1785. The ship there is listed as the *Jacob and Anthony*.

2. Despite this sharp-eyed observation, MOW would capitulate and dedicate her 1790 book to Washington.

3. MOW's son JW2 appears to have given a trenchant critique to his mother's verse drama *The Sack of Rome*, later published in *Poems, Dramatic and Miscellaneous* (Boston: I. Thomas and E. T. Andrews, 1790).

75 TO WINSLOW WARREN

Milton Nov. 11th 1784

Your enclosures both by Adams[?] & Hill are safely delivered to all as directed. But when I take up my pen to reply to those to myself, I have so many things to say & so many passions to combate that the Ideas flow too fast for utterance. Every sigh that my Winslow sends towards the beloved Tremont is swelled to a Gale that would soon waft him to the beloved Residence, could I be assured a speedy Return would coopperate with his Interest. But I will cherish a hope that the fortuitous events of Bussiness will expedite the period of his return, or to speak more in my own stile, that the providential Destination of human affairs will shortly direct your steps to the parental Roof with safety & success. Mean time, nothing will be neglected within the power of your Friends to promote your wishes. I shall explore the high grounds a little back from the Road, & when I think I have found the spot on which I think you have fixed your eye, I will endeavour to plant the trees, to cultivate the rising slips & visit the spreading Bower till you return to dress it yourself.

The other circumstance to compleat your felicity (in the soft domestic line), I believe must be left to your own Taste. Nor will it be placed altogether to the score[?] of partiallity, if I should tell you, with your accomplishments & advantages, I think the option lies with yourself. But if you really choose an affair of that Nature, should be negotiated by a Friend in whom you place unlimited confidence. No attention will be wanting in that *Friend* to fix on an object or any address neglected that may obtain every thing that might contribute to your Happiness. But I must tell you that though Fortune is a convenience that few would pass by, yet depend upon it, a Man of understanding & taste can never be made happy by

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that alone. But when I hear from you again I will be more explicit on the subject.

Can you be in earnest when you intimate that it is in my power to call you from the European World whenever I please? Was it optional with me, you would soon be fixed in your native country in the Vicinity of Milton, if not somwhere about the borders of Tremont. Nature has ornamented this place with a liberal hand. It posseses many advantages both for bussiness & pleasure, yet with me the Enjoyment is mar[r]ed by the abscence of my Children.

But your good Father seems to be in better Health & spirits than when you left us. He is determined to beautify & adorn his delightful Villa, nor do I think he will leave it till the Decree of heaven removes[?] him to a state of higher perfection. He has again been a candidate for a Member of Congress, & without[?] his own consent has proved the unanimous choice of both Houses in his favour. But his Attachment to private life was ever incompatible with his long Labours in the field of politics. And nothing is more [??] to him than the idea of emerging once more from the quiet scenes of domestic Bliss & the calm hours of contemplation to engage in the arduous attempt of saving a new formed republic from the consequences of their own folly & ignorance, more especially when almost every Department is filled with Men unacquainted with or indifferent to the principles of the Revolution, and who are ready to barter the fairest advantages ever offered for the Establishment of public happiness to the narrow Veiws which too frequently express[?] the commercial character, & bring down the standard of the most exalted systems of power[?] to a level with the Interests of the selfish individual. These Ideas retarded an explicit declaration from him that he would accept a Delegation. Yet convinced of the necessity that that Body ought to be composed of tryed[?] & impeccable characters of such as have the courage to resist the dangerous machinations of foreign influence, & the Resolution to combate the local Vices which are grown rampant & may of themselves prove fatal to the Honour & Freedom of America. He would not again have refused had the choice fallen upon him. But the engines of B. with the little arts of N. at the head of the contemptable group, sensible that their own importance rests intirly in the Exclusion & Retirement of men of more Ability & integrity, successfully insinuated that neither the Exigencies of the times,

nor the suffrages of the assembly, would draw a Man from private life who had so frequently refused the first offices of the state.

Thus unfortunately a pretext is given for the prostitution of place & the Reins of Government are weakly held by some of the most insignificant Members of society.

After the resignation of Messiurs Dana & Dalton, Gorham & Mr. King, a young layer from N berry were chosen, the former of which immediatly refused attendance on Congress, having lately engaged in large commercial projects. The contest hung suspended for some time between B & D, the Latter of which in his usual cool intriguing spirit, kept himself wraped up in Mistery leaving the world to conjecture whose Interest he supports. He, however, gained the election one day, & declined it the next. His successor was no less a personage than Reverend Nathan *Cushing*, who it is supposed will honour that agust Body with his presence. What expectations are to be formed from such a Manuver, both in a public & private View, you who know the characters of these people will easily judge. D. behaved well & suggested the interest of B, as did 15 to the last. This Man is bound to Europe in a few months, where he ardently wishes for a consular appointment. How those foreign arrangments will terminate is to me [??] However, am in some doubt whether our worthy friend H will go on unless some thing should take place to give him some more worthy associates—He has Nothing of the importance of 3 & believes he has no other functional[?] distinction except a Wig a little more conformed to the legislative Curve. Thus much for politics & polititions, & will conclude with your own excellent *Burlesque* on *Government* indeed.

25 gos to Northhamton in a week or two, believe he will write you first. Hope his application will be unremiting & his improvments rapid.[1]

All the American Troops are disbanded, which has put a period to the hope of 11[?] with regard to a military life. He has shiped himself on a Road[?] to go to Virginia & London on a ship belonging to F——[?], perhaps with the expectation of Peter the Great in hopes of resting[?] in the Navy. [??] jun. is gone to settle at Rinebeck in the line of his proffession. P & R are [??] of Matrimony. The affairs of Lilly & the Lady at the Foot[?] of the Hill will not long remain in status quo, as Lil is fixing himself at Bedford in the mercantile line.

Y will be highly gratified by a letter from you, besides it may not militate with your Interest. She is very happy & dare say she has as much influance with T as any woman can wish.

Can you believe that the first visit made by 23 on his arival in this state was to your parents? He had the Effrontery to enter on the Edge of the Evening with all the airs of affirmed Friendship. It was in my own House—his reception was a constrained, cold civility, yet he put up for the Night, though manifestly chagrined & mortified. Each one of the Family carefully avoided mentioning your Name, & he was modest enough not to speak of you himself. We showed him an apartment on which to repose as Hospitality required, but he took himself off before any of the Family rose in the Morning. Nor can I tell you where he now is.

I have not seen Plimouth since you left us. If 24 lives to return & do bussiness, he thinks of settling there.[2] As T[?] with whom he is a favorite has told him, he will endeavour to make it mutually beneficial, but these are contingencies on which I do not much depend.

All inteligence relative to bussiness & also the public papers you will have from your Father & Brother. If I think of any thing more in the domestic line, I shall fill up this sheet.

I mean to employ myself much in writing the ensuing winter if my health & other circumstances will admit. If ever you determine to publish certain Manuscripts,[3] I will comply with your request & perhaps prepare some other small Tracts that may be useful, though will not promise anything in the Dramatic way.

The celebrated Mrs. Macauley Graham is with us. She is a lady whose resources of knowledge seem to be always inexhaustable. She has suffered much by the spirit of party, but I think her not only a learned but a virtuous worthy character with much sensibility of Heart & Dignity of Manners. Indeed when I contemplate the superiority of her Genius I blush for the imperfections of human Nature, & when I consider her as my Friend, I draw a Veil over the Foibles of the Woman. And while as distinguished Tallents exhibit the sex at least on a Footing of Equality, their Delivery[?] is hurt by her improper connexion. Her Right of private Judgment & independency of spirit may vindicate the step, but I fear the world will not readily forgive. Yet Mr. G appears to be a Man of understanding & Virtue.

I thank you for the very fine grapes which would have come in excellent order, but by some accident the jars were broken & many of them bruised,

so as to make the sand[?] very wet, which injured the most of them. The carpet is very much admired. I think it the handsomest of the kind I ever saw. I send you the dimensions of one for the Red Room. Eleven foot [??] nice[?]. If you was to send a Doz. for common sized Rooms have no doubt they would bear a good advance.

I have been so lengthy in my communications that I shall hasten to a conclusion after telling you I have so great an opinion of your prudence that I think it unnecessary to caution you to be very reserved in your observations with regard to the Laws, Government, police, Religion, or Manners of the foreign Nations which Bussiness, pleasure, or curiosity may lead you to visit.

Your own Integrity, your amiable Manners I trust will ever secure you Friends amidst a World of strangers till the Benignant Hand of Heaven shall conduct you back to the arms of your affectionate parents. I doubt not your prayers arise in unison with theirs when they bow before the altar of Mercy & ask the happy Return of their sons. Nor will a Benediction for Eternity ever be forgotten by your Mother,
M. Warren

Nov. 14th
The order you left with Mr. Prentice in London I suppose is not complyed with as nothing is yet come to hand.

MWP2, RC

1. "25" appears to be George Warren.

2. By "24" MOW means her son Charles.

3. MOW considered WW her literary adjudicator and sent him copies of her two verse dramas—perhaps hoping he might affirm their suitability as publications. She also sent copies to JA in hopes he might get them produced on the London stage, but with no luck.

76 TO WINSLOW WARREN

Milton Jan 4th 1785
It is now some time since I wrote my dear Winslow, not through inattention or any abatement of the strongest affection that ever warmed the parental bosom, but few opportunities have presented which mistify me

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on a double account. A constant intercourse we naturally wish & should be happy were it kept up by means that would give you bussiness as well as pleasure. But your Father & your harry will tell you everything Relative to commercial affairs, nor need I say how much they have at heart promotion of your Veiws.

I have many things to say in reply to your very entertaining Letters. I wish to observe on every paragraph, but my pen is at present restricted even by the Contents of those Letters. But alas, for poor Human nature.

I am very happy that most of my sons are fond of Books. The literary man finds his pleasure in prosperity & his Resources in disappointment, from the maxims, the Wisdom, and the Experience of ages—yet he is obliged often to clime over the Lumbered piles of Learned incoherence to find the truth or dances or the fanciful print of wit & genius till he intirely Looses sight of it. When after all it is generally to be found in the simple dress of plain common sense before the feelings of the man are corrupted by passion, or his understanding warped by superficial systems, which when the attempt is made for a thorough investigation, he is frequently Left in a maze of error & inconsistence ten fold more insur[mou]ntable than the path from which he wandered in the beginning. I believe your acquaintance with the modern celebrated writers (particularly the French), has before this time convinced you that their Elegant enchanting stile much oftener delights, warms, and charms the imagination than convince the judgment. Do[?] tell me in your next if you do not agree with me. I love your Letters & admire many of your observations, but you will undoubtedly be careful to put them into safe hands.

Liberallity & candour is so much more honourable to mankind than bigotry that I am pleased when my sons examine for themselves, yet while they inquire would not have them loose sight of what their Fathers have esteemed as the oracles of truth, nor suffer novelty to misguide the mind which often give is a byas[?] not less dangerous than the early prejudices of Education.

I have a little more Leasure in my hands this winter than usual having only one son at home & prevented rambling by the dreary season. Therefore, as I make a point of complying as far as I am capable with every request you make, I am determined to attempt your gratification in what you have repeatedly wished, though it is not practicable to procure a translation of P Corneille among my acquaintance.[1] Yet without his assessment[?]

may perhaps forward you something in the dramatic Line before long & shall at least be certain the compliance will give you pleasure if it succeeds no further.

I heard the last evening from your Brother Charles by letters dated Cape Francois Nov. 28. He finds the air of that Country agrees with him at present. Says he is really better, can walk 2 or 3 miles in a morning, but is much better pleased with the clime than the inhabitants. He does not seem to be more charmed with the manners of the people than some young Gentlemen of my acquaintance are with those in another part of the World. He means to write you from there if possible. Intends home in the spring & I believe if he is able to do bussiness will set up at Plimouth, as he had a promise from T. on his return to endeavour to make it mutually advantageous. He says remember me to my dear, dear Winslow whom I most sincerely love.

As to George, you would think by his Letters from north hamton that he was indeed among the Goths or the aborigines of America, but believe by this opportunity he will give you some account of himself.

Congress are to meet at N York the 11 instant when I hope some matters that have long been in suspense will be determined. I assure you my patience is almost exhausted, though I always thought a great share was necessary for anyone who had much to do with a *court*.

I had a letter from H a few days since. He mentions you in the usual friendly way & says some things have necessarily lain dormant, through the multiplicity of bussiness, which will be taken up soon on their meeting again. I had previously written him everything you could wish relative both to time & *place*.

R H Lee[2] is president of Congress who has always been a Friend of your Fathers.

The Commissioners for the treasury have all resigned as supposed by the extensive influence of A. who would like to continue in office, but a new set will be chosen immediately.

B. is grown so unimportant that he is seldom mentioned either in town or country unless when a new Election or a fit of the gout is coming in. The only change made the last week in a new choice for directors of the Bank was the duping of Q. supposed through the influance & pique of an insurance officer in State Street. You will have an account of the situation of the Massachusetts bank from other hands.

The letters put into the poket of a Chaise were never found by the person to whom they belonged. The Curiosity of a son Elect[?] might examine & suppose them as the Carriage was left in his hands.

The pleasant Lot at the right hand of Milton house is not yet disposed of. No body in this part of the world thinks of purchasing Lands at present, not because they may not in time be productive Estate, but from the amazing scarcity of Cash which continually runs to foreign markets for the superfluities of life.[3] Nor will the Effect be suspended so long as there is anything among us that will support the present Ideas of Elegance that has universally taken hold of the minds of a people whose Exports, by the best calculations, will not pay for the single article of Gauze now considered as a necessary of Life by the lowest Class of Females.

But Theory & speculation either in Religion, politics, or commerce has little influence on the conduct of man. It must be experience & somtimes dearly bought that makes a reform either in the individual or the community.

The case you left in the care of a Mr. Prentice never came to hand, & since I have learned the contents, feel no small disappointment, as I should have esteemed it the most valuable *ornament* in my house. Perhaps your next may inform what you immagine became of the Furniture designed for the Hall. It will lie as you left it till I have further from you. Hope the package was not put on board Folgier[4] as he was ship wrecked near the Islands, & with Difficulty saved himself & people with a very small part of the cargo at Antigua.

You know not how much I am gratifyed by the excellent advice contained in most of your Letters to your younger Brothers. It is a forming Time, a precious season with them. Their character & prosperity in future life depends in a great measure on their associations, connexions, & conduct of the present period. They are very clever, very promissing, but youth is apt to rate its non-capacity of judging far beyond what Experience will warrant, and the natural love of conviviallity & amusement too frequently draw people of all ages into company from which they can derive very little improvement, by which young persons often suffer essentially when the elder loose nothing but their time, a possession the most important & the least valued of any thing we can properly call our own.

Your Brother Harry is not quite determined whether to continue in Boston or to go to Kenebeck when he leaves for[?] Shattuck in the spring.

A large store built on the left on the beautiful corner opposite to Glovers has been in contemplation to erect works on the river & endeavour to force bussiness in the Environs. What think you of this project? Perhaps one day you may do it yourself. But at present, no mortal can tell where or in what Line it is best for a young Gentleman to fix. But hope things in this country will wear a more eligible appearance before long.

11 Jan

I mentioned that Congress meet this day at N York where they mean to continue till Trenton[5] now made the Federal [??] ready for their reception. One hundred thousand Dollars were voted for that purpose before their late short adjournment. A State House, a house for the President & Family and Buildings for the other Delegates & great officers are to be erected. Gov. Knox has left the Neighbourhood of Milton, spends the winter at Boston, but suppose he will soon be appointed Secretary of War, as he and the Baron Steuben are the only candidates.[6]

I have so much to say & suppose my dear Winslow at his residence must be fond of hearing everything from his Country & Friends, that I should not suffer half a page blank to go out of my hands, did not your Father call on me to finish *instantly*, as the dispatches are to be forwarded to Boston without delay.

But as soon as this is folded, my pen will be employed on some other sheet for your amusement, as I feel more disposed to write than to look abroad so long as the Face of Winter looks so dreary among us. I suppose if you are well you are basking in the sunshine of Nature, & I hope prosperity.

I understand several Vessels are expected from Lisbon in this month. May we have such inteligence as will gladden the Hearts of your Friends, & more particularly that of your,
With affection inexpressible,
M. Warren

MWP2, RC

1. Pierre Corneille (1606–84), French dramatist and author of *The Cid*, among other plays. Except for a few individual plays, there do not appear to have been any easily procurable eighteenth-century editions of his works in English translation and certainly no American editions.

2. Richard Henry Lee (1732–94) of Virginia, who in 1785 was the president of Congress under the Articles of Confederation. For Lee-Warren correspondence, see *WAL*.

3. As MOW has alluded to in previous letters, part of the financial crisis of the 1780s had to do with lack of circulating money. People simply could not turn fixed assets into liquid ones, stalling the economy and leaving people like the Warrens land-rich but cash-poor.

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77 TO MARTHA BALL CUSTIS WASHINGTON

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Milton April 1785

My dear Madam,

Though it is some time since I did myself the honour of addressing you, it is with pleasure I resume the pen to convey a line at her request through the hand of a lady whose literary productions will immortalize her name.

The truly republican spirit of M^rs^ Macaulay Graham awakened a curiosity in her to see the American world which has done so much to establish their principles among mankind. She thinks she should neither do justice

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to herself or to the opinions she has disseminated by her writings if she finished her excursion without paying her compliments to a gentleman whose name stands at the head of a list of heroes, who have ventured their all, in a cause which has entailed on them a degree of glory, that neither time nor the adventitious circumstances of future revolutions will ever erase.

Their taste for the accomplished and their relish for the conversation of the learned, would ensure, the most cordial reception to M^rs^ Macaulay, without the ceremony of recommendatory letters, from those of her friends who have been happy in a more early acquaintance. Yet I had no inclination to decline her request, to introduce her at Mount Vernon. I have no doubt her visit will be mutually agreeable, to herself, and my friends there.

If General Washington has not forgotten his old associates, who first laboured with him in the public cause, he will recognize the character of General Warren who now desires most respectful compliments.

He has retired to private life, but with the same patriotic principles, which laid the foundation of the late revolution, with the same feelings for the universal freedom and happiness of mankind, and with unimpaired esteem for the uniform supporters of the glorious cause which warmed his bosom when first honoured with General Washington's friendship.

He desires me to say he should more frequently have affixed his name to the testimonials of his regards, but the man and great avocations of the commander in chief of the American Armies, led him to consider letters merely complimentory or friendly, as rather an intrusion on his time, than a mark of kindness, when both his exertions, and his time, were every moment required by the public.

These gentleman are now both in another line making improvements for the benifit of mankind, but promoting the arts of agriculture and peace. Nothing would give M^r^ Warren greater pleasure, than either a personal interview, or a continuance of their literary intercourse.

Be assured Madam, every friendly attention has accompanied you through the painful and pleasing events of public or domestic life, since we bid adieu at Watertown, and through the military encampments where you have sometimes ventured to rest, to your return, to your retreat in

Virginia, you have had the best wishes that could be wafted you from the friendly bosom of your
Humble Ser^{vt}
M Warren

MWP1

78 TO JANET LIVINGSTON MONTGOMERY

Milton April 1785

This will be handed [to?] my friend M^{rs} Montgomery by a lady who need not wish for recommendatory letters to those whose taste and education qualify them for the conversation of the learned and polite.

M^{rs} Macaulay's genius does honour to her sex: her works have established the celebrity of her name, and for the honour of human nature, I hope her principles will endear her to Americans: who ought to bestow lasting applause on all those who have distinguished themselves either by the sword or the pen in defence of those opinions, which have produced a revolution as remarkable as any recorded in history.

After a short acquaintance you will wonder it is with regret I see this lady about to leave this part of America. I have assured her the pleasure will be mutual when she meets M^{rs} Montgomery, her excellent mother, and amiable sisters nor will the gentleman of your fraternal circle be less pleased with her conversation.

The last time I had the pleasure of receiving from you was the[?] the hand of an agreeable, sensible, French gentleman, whose visit was much shorter than we wished. Colonel *Tournant*[?] appears not only a gallant, polite officer, but the man of talents equal to his education among the literati of France.

I hear you have had a gay and I hope a happy winter in your native residence, I understand the city of New York is briliant beyond its former appearance: and its inhabitants in the full enjoyment of those pleasures which a life of dissipation and amusement can give.

If your days my dear madam are clouded by the recollection of the past, you will also recollect that you have still a balance in the scale of blessings.

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The favours of providence exhibit the equal justice of his dealings whose adjustment are wise and [??] system perfect.

This we may learn from every thing that passes before us though we must wait till the curtain falls, before we can fathom the necessity of those painful conflicts we feel, and the inequalities of happiness which we see fall to the lot of man below.

To those who consider this world and the worlds that surround it as the work of chance, these observations may be ridiculed as the dream of supertition and weakness but my friend can smile with me on the much greater absurdities of the sceptic, who relinquishes the care of his God, and denies the superior tendency of his creator.

We will console ourselves therein and rely upon that providence that mixes our cup as he sees fit, and continues, or cuts off, the pleasures of social or domestic life.

These reflections though not fashionable in the intercourse of polite life, are natural to a mother who has spent the winter past in an unremitting attention, by the languid bed of an amiable youth, whose complaints had almost cut off the hopes of recovery. But we begin again to flatter ourselves, that your favourite among my little circle, the sensible, the sedate, the social, and the beloved *Charles* will yet be spared to his friends, and to the world.

I hope I shall hear that an introduction to the acquaintance of M^rs^ Macaulay has given you pleasure as it really has to your affectionate friend
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79 TO JOHN ADAMS

Milton September 1785

Sir

The account of your sons arrival in America you will have from himself;—the pleasure his friends recieve from his return you will not doubt, and though you had not requested my attention to him—be assured that in every instance where my advice may be either useful or pleasing I shall treat him as a son of my own. This I am disposed to do not only from the

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long friendship which I have felt for his parents, and quickened by their particular request, but from that appearance of amiable dispositions in him which I dare say will secure the affection of their friend.

That the *dreamers have dreamed*, and the prophets long since foretold that M^r^ Adams would be the first American minister to the Court of Great Britain, is not more certain than the general satisfaction expressed at the completion of this event:—and though it is a station requiring much delicacy and address, and attended with difficulty and fatigue, I have no doubt his abilities and perseverance are adequate to the important trust.

I cannot see any thing, you Sir, can have reason to *dread*, from this appointment, nor have I penetration sufficient to discover any thing pitious in your situation;—envy it is true is a canker worm that generally crawls round the loftiest branches, and grows meager in the nutricious soil that gendered it. It is a reptile that may infest but seldom destroys the heart of oak, and while you enjoy the dignity of office, may your self approbation ever counterbalance the malignancy of rivalships. These may weaken the hands but seldom depress the heart of true magnanimity; nor will the train of emissaries who delight in mischief (unless I am greatly mistaken) affect your reputation, integrity or *vigilance*.

They indeed appear in variety of shapes and shades, and surrounded with such dazzling lights as might put out the eyes of one less firmly attached to the interest of his country. Melancholy it is there are few characters so impeccable, that there is no danger of their loosing sight of their patriotism in the golden mists, which remarkably pervade the Island of your present residence.

Speculatists have observed that this shining fog is more or less apt to injure the opticks of the greatest statesman and politicians.—I trust the probity of a gentleman who has braved the ordeal in the purlieus of the most briliant court, is in little danger from balls, birthrights or the nameless favours that the dignified splendor of either sex can bestow. You have stood the test for more than seven years amidst jarring parties on each side the Atlantic that would equally have rejoiced at your fall: therefore few are afraid of trusting you in England.

You enquire pathetically "*when shall I again see my friend Warren in public life*." I answer when republics are famed for their gratitude,—and the multitude learn to discriminate;—when they more respect their real friends, than the popular demagogues, or the lukewarm sticklers for public

liberty who have sacrificed nothing to her cause; when the powerful balance of wealth ceases to outweigh the shining qualities of honest patriotism and not before.

He has never *retreated from the service* of *his country*. It is true particular circumstances which I dare say Mr Adams would have thought weighty, have led him at certain periods to decline several very honorary offices;—this his enemies have industriously improved to prevent his reelection.

His independency of spirit supported by the rectitude of his intentions will never suffer him to make the smallest exertion to counteract their manoevres. Yet should his country again call him into their service, depend upon it, notwithstanding his preference to private life, he will again step forth with the same indefatigable zeal and integrity that has hitherto distinguished his character.

Mr Dana is appointed one of the Judges of the supreme Court[1]—Mr Gerry according to the confederation will not be eligible as a delegate to Congress after November.[2] I wish his countrymen may never forget his merit, but if his happiness depended upon their favour, probably he might long pursue, without ever overtaking the phantom. But I have reason to believe he means in future to build on the more solid basis of domestic felicity where along the prize is to be found.

Will your very eligible situation at the Court of London, hush every future sigh to reside by the silent hills in the neighbourhood of Tremont?—Your friends here ardently wish for your society, but many and important are the affairs that ought to be negotiated at that Court: probably before they are adjusted many who are anxiously waiting the event may be called to stand in the presence of a Being infinitely superior to the bustling potentates of this speck of creation.

Shall I ask the favour of you Sir to transmit the enclosed by some safe conveyance to your young friend at Lisbon. I am anxious to know if there is a probability of a treaty between America and Portugal. You Sir, can tell. Nothing would have induced this young gentleman to have fixed himself in a country where the manners, the religion, and government are so dissonant to the liberal ideas in which he has been educated, but the promise of a Consular appointment from many of the most respectable members of Congress. He has been long kept in suspence. You have said that from his own merit he is entitled to more than such a consideration;—you very well know his fathers services, you are sensible that he long laboured in

the arduous struggle to secure the liberties of his country, without any inducement[?] either of honour or profit to himself or his family. Why this business is thus delayed appears very extraordinary to me:—after all, such an appointment in a distant country to an amiable son, is a very inadequate compensation for the fatigues and sufferings of an excellent father.

You will excuse this freedom communicating the domestic feelings of one who subscribes respectfully your friend
M Warren

MWP1

1. Francis Dana (1743–1811), who accepted the appointment as a Supreme Court justice in April.

2. After serving as a delegate to Congress from 1783–85, Elbridge Gerry was elected to the Massachusetts House of Representatives for the period 1785–86.

80 TO JAMES WARREN JR.

[In 1784 MOW's middle son Charles was debilitated by tuberculosis. After a failed visit to Haiti in that year to recuperate, he took the risk of sailing to Cadiz, Spain, in 1785 to meet his brother Winslow in Portugal. Meanwhile, WW, having failed once again in Europe to secure any feasible position as a diplomat or merchant, was returning to the United States at the same time that Charles was en route to Europe. Becoming seriously ill on board, Charles was put off in Sanlucar de Barrameda, on the southwest coast of Spain. This next letter was written in response to the news of his death on November 30, 1785. By this time, Charles's oldest brother, James, had moved from Milton to Hingham, between Boston and Plymouth.]

Milton [January] 178[6][1]

My dear Son,

The tidings which justly wound your heart assailed my ears the day before yesterday. I was at Boston and could not return that day to my own house[,] the proper asylum of grief. There I shall pay the tribute of a tear to the memory of a most amiable youth, so long as time is lent to one who

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has been long taught to look into the grave for many, many of her associates. But I think I can say without a murmur—I desire to adore the hand that hath smitten us;—us alone it is, for I trust the dear youth was made perfect through sufferings.

He died as he lived with the calm, uniform dignity of virtue about him—he met the cold messenger of death with intrepidity and faith, nor expressed a wish for protracted life. You remember an expression of his own, in the trials of the last year—"that he had long stood on the brink of eternity and viewed life as a bursting bubble"; and shall we wish him to return from the society of the blessed—from the rank he holds with the spirits of just men made perfect to gratify our ardent fondness for the conversation of so discreet, so judicious a friend?—No—he has done his work—he has entered before us and perhaps may have the favoured task assigned him to bid welcome to the eternal abodes those he so tenderly loved while in this probationary state. Perhaps it was necessary he should step before us to heighten our gratitude, our hope, our exertions which are too apt to flag while in the zenith of earthly felicity.

I will not say we have lost a rich treasure; it is only safely deposited till we are prepared for higher fruition.

He grew worse immediately after he wrote a few lines on his passage from Boston: was exceedingly ill, when arrived at Cadiz, and though a stranger, amidst aliens in manners, language, and religion, his amiable deportment made him many friends. He had every accommodation, and relinquished the idea of going to Lisbon, before he received his brother's letters; and prepared himself for death in that place without once shrinking at the approach of the king of terrors.

The event took place on the evening of the thirtieth of November. The servant who went with him closed his eyes without another attendant. This lad he ordered to the very last to read to him select passages of scripture, which he pointed out; particularly the first chapter to the Hebrews, and first of Romans; "I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ," &c.

Thus he has been made another witness of the truth and consolations of that religion, which many miserable beings affect to despise. He has done more for the honour of religion and for the improvement of the human soul, in this short period of his existence than most people who linger on and count up their useless scores.

But it was a peculiar dispensation of Providence, that this young creature should be attacked alone in his last days by the zealous efforts of a superstitious clergy, to abjure the principles of his youth:—but he stood firm to the last moment, and told them with a frankness and a fortitude which always marked his character that he should die in the faith he early imbibed.

I mourn for myself—I weep for my surviving children, who have lost such an invaluable companion, but for him I feel an inexpressible calmness;—if virtue is acceptable to the Deity and reaps the retribution which reason and religion teaches, he must be happy. Then hush every tumultuous thought which nature prompts to wish his longer residence in this corrupt world.

Your parents are now alone;—"Yet the candle of the Lord may yet shine on our tabernacle";—we have yet amiable children about us. Henry leaves us on monday to begin a life of business at Plymouth. Heaven bless him, he is an excellent youth. He wished to see you before he went, but he has had his head, his hands, and now his heart is full. We have yet received no letters, when we do they shall be communicated by your affectionate mother.—
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1. The date in the Letterbook draft reads "1785," but this is probably in error; it is more likely to be early 1786, quite possibly mid- to late January, given the date for Charles's death and the time for news to arrive.

81 TO ELBRIDGE GERRY

Milton February 19 1786

My son[1] who lately returned unexpectedly from Europe (where he stayed a little too long for his own Interest, [??] therto like thousands before him, by the most delusory of all Dependencies, the Expectation of court Favour) will deliver my friend Mr. Gerry my most sincere Congratulations on the Felicity he has Reason to promiss himself in his new and agreable Connexion. For though unacquainted with the Lady, I have no doubt her

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personal accomplishments must be brilliant, and her mind formed by the cultivation of the social & domestic Virtues, or she would never have been the choice of a Gentleman of superior Delicacy of Taste, one who had been long looking out to find [??] in the same person a combination of all the Virtues that adorn the sex.[2]

But now the indissoluble union is formed. The most certain criterion of real merit is the mutual Wish to promote the Honour, the Tranquility, & consequently the Felicity of each. I would not have you suspect I am about forming a set of maxims for connubial happiness, though thirty years experience might possibly plead [??] in its Favour of a Lecture on the subject. But though that is not my design, the emotions of a friendly Heart operate so strongly in my Breast that I could not be silent on an occassion replete with Consequences too important to be viewed with indifference, though it may be too frequently a pecuniary contract payed in a depreciating Coin by which both parties are deceived.

But do you mean to come forward & suffer your friends to form their own opinions of your choice? With my best compliments to *Mrs. Gerry* tell her she need not fear a deficiency in point of candour will succeed the appearance of curiosity, for depend upon it this is a prediliction in her Favour among those who are best acquainted with her partner. At least I can answer positively for the inhabitants of Milton Hill—and as a proof thereof your excellent Friend there has forgiven the laconic stile & the circumscribed Limits of your late Epistles, in Consideration of that monopoly of your time which he did not then know an amiable lady had a right to claim. Mr. Warren is not at this moment at home. If he was, I am sure he would unite with me in the warmest Wish that you might both enjoy the plenitude of human Felicity so long as the Eye of omnicience shall see it best to prevent an interruption.

As you, sir, are now out of the line of politics, I will not call up the thorny subject by naming a person or a circumstance that has any connexion therewith, though the Feild is not less ample, nor are Misteries less frequent than they have been in any part of the preceeding ten years. Hush to the busey workings of Fancy which if indulged might exhibit a picture both ludicrous & solemn—therefore let Fortune[?] play her wanton Gambols, caprice be crowned with [??] Laurel of [??] & imbecility precide in the Chair of Wisdom. [It] may be viewed with indifference by one

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82 TO CATHARINE SAWBRIDGE MACAULAY GRAHAM

Milton [September?] 1786

It is long, very long, my dear madam since the social intercourse that has given me so much pleasure has been suspended; but not from any neglect or a want of regard on either side. I speak from the feelings of my own heart; and I think I can answer for those of my friend, that the lamp of esteem burns as ardent as ever;—but, alas! the distance and the difficulty of communication! this checks my pen, while I hope yours is employed to give pleasure and instruction to mankind.

I congratulate you that you have safely arrived on your beloved Island after a long and hazardous voyage across the Atlantic: a journey through the greatest part of America: and since that the fatigues of a tour through a considerable part of France. Such a length of time elapsed before I had the pleasure of a line, that I began to apprehend some misfortune had taken place; for I could not suspect that though you had bid adieu to these distant shores, you had taken a final leave of all you had gratified by your visit here.

I do not wonder that a mind formed like yours, glowing with the love of freedom and independence, should risk the danger of crossing the seas with the hope of seeing the system of virtue and liberty, the Idol of political and philosophical writers of former ages realized in modern times. But

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I congratulate you that you have safely arrived on your beloved Island after a long and hazardous voyage across the Atlantic: a journey through the greatest part of America: and since that the fatigues of a tour through a considerable part of France. Such a length of time elapsed before I had the pleasure of a line, that I began to apprehend some misfortune had taken place; for I could not suspect that though you had bid adieu to these distant shores, you had taken a final leave of all you had gratified by your visit here.

I do not wonder that a mind formed like yours, glowing with the love of freedom and independence, should risk the danger of crossing the seas with the hope of seeing the system of virtue and liberty, the Idol of political and philosophical writers of former ages realized in modern times. But

methinks I hear you cry, Alas! for human nature! as face answers to face so does the character of Nation to Nation: at least so far as a simularity of circumstances puts it in the power of the governed to enjoy quietly the luxuries of life or the Governors to prevent the indulgence by the abuse of power.

Yet notwithstanding you acknowledge your disappointment and think our practice does not comport with the principles professed and inculcated in the day of our distress, I do not despair of America. Though her native propensities to folly are strengthened and the seeds of every foreign vice have taken deep root—yet she may long retain a greater share of simplicity, virtue, and freedom, than perhaps can be found in almost any other part of the civilized world. This may justly be attributed more to her local situation and the incapacity for splendid indulgence from the general equality of fortune, than from superior policy or moderation.

You have doubtless been informed of the tumults that have lately taken place in some of our Counties: they have risen to insurrections at which our enemies rejoice: and our friends tremble. We have indeed been much alarmed at the appearances of discontent, disorder, and riot; the people now feel the burthen of the late war and the pressure of their public and private debts, heightened by the injudicious conduct of some in power both in the legislative and executive departments; who feel little for the lower classes of the people; who though complaining of grievances seem not to be sensible from what causes they arrive. But we hope that these disorders will soon be suppressed, and a due subordination will appear on the one side: and lenity and justice on the other: that energy and wisdom will go hand in hand and maintain peace, order, and independence to each of the states in the union: but these things will undoubtably be improved by certain characters and descriptions of men to strengthen the hand of power and draw tight the reins of government. Yours Affectionately
M Warren

MWP1

83 TO JOHN ADAMS

[In 1786, a band of disaffected farmers and others in western Massachusetts joined a rebellion led by Daniel Shays in opposition to eastern state interests and the heavy tax burden they felt they unfairly shouldered. Thinking themselves as acting in the spirit of the Revolution, the participants in Shays's Rebellion discovered that in fact the old revolutionaries lined up solidly against them—even radicals like Sam Adams. Henry Warren joined the force that suppressed the rebellion, but rumors began to spread that JW had supported the revolt. JA heard these rumors and expressed his increasing unhappiness with the Warren family. MOW attempts once again to justify the family political position.]

Milton December 1786

You Sir, have been so long absent from your native Country that you can scarcely realize its present situation; nor shall I attempt to give you an exact portrait though. Yet I will observe the imbecility of human nature, is here exhibited in as strong a light at this period, as perhaps may be found in any page of history.

Emancipated from a foreign yoke, the blessings of peace just restored upon honourable terms, with the liberty of forming our own governments, framing our own laws, choosing our own magistrates, and adopting manners the most favourable to freedom and happiness, yet sorry I am to say I fear we have not virtue sufficient to avail ourselves of these superior advantages.

The glorious fabric which you and your compeers with so much labour and assiduity have successfully reared, may totter to the foundation before the civil feuds that have justly alarmed the Continent, and more particularly the Massachusetts are entirely quelled.

In this Country, lately armed for opposition to regal despotism, there seems to be on the one side a boldness of spirit that sets at defiance all authority, government, and order, and on the other, not a secret wish only, but an open avowal of a necessity for drawing the reins of power much too tight for republicanism, or even for a wise and limited Monarchy. Perhaps America is in the predicament of an adventurous youth, who has disengaged himself from parental authority, before the period of maturity that

might have taught him to make a proper use of his freedom. You have a friend here who equally criminates the conduct of both parties.

The causes of the late western commotions may be easily investigated, but the consequences must be left to the hand of time. The Cincinnati who have been waiting a favourable tide to waft them on to the strong fortress of nobility, are manifestly elated by the present prospect. A large body of wealthy citizens are flattering themselves, that a strong aristocratic power is fast forming and connecting through this country, while the younger classes, more especially the professional characters, are crying loud for a Monarchy and a standing army to support it.

Time will make curious disclosure, and you Sir, may be astonished to find the incendiaries who have fomented the discontents among the miserable insurgents of the Massachusetts, in a class of men least expected. These in order to skreen their own guilt, have secretly fabricated a vague report, and caused the malignant rumour to light for a moment on one of the most decided friends to the constitution, and to his country: a gentleman whose services have been distinguished, whose patriotism is unshaken, and his virtues unconquerable. His fortune has been diminished, himself and his family have personally and severely suffered in the public cause: he is now persecuted by the spirit of party, and too much neglected by some who ought from particular obligations to continue his *friend*. But he bears the reverse of popularity, and the misfortunes of life, with the dignity of conscious rectitude, and that philosophic calmness which is never the companion of *insurgency*, anarchy, or fraud.

I have always thought epithets of this kind, when applied to such a character, too ridiculous for serious refutation but to my surprise have lately found, that by a strange combination of parties invidious to each other and who have only united to depress a man of too much sincerity, uniformity, and independency of spirit, to subserve their designs, they have been so successful as in a few instances to injure M^{r} Warren in the opinion of some he highly esteems.

The philosophical observers[?] of human conduct, I believe are pretty generally convinced that it is not worth while for a wise man to make very great sacrifices for political liberty;—and it is my opinion that from their wanton abuse of their best friends, and the manner in which they trifle with the prize, the people of America least of all deserve to enjoy it.

But in all ages, mankind are governed less by reason than opinion, the caprice of the day, or import of a moment will blow them about as with a whirlwind, and bear them down the current of folly, until awakened by their misery. Virtue in the sublimest sense has an influence only on a chosen few—and in their breasts it often finds its own reward.

Yet, perhaps after all America may emerge from its present cloud,—and a more favourable termination of the embarrassments that lie in the way of her honour and her freedom may take place, than we have reason to apprehend from present appearances. In this hope I leave the field of politics, convinced that human happiness depends on too many contingencies, to suffer us to forget our weakness, and our entire dependence on a Being who holds the scale of Empire and of justice.

Dependence is a word not very pleasing to an American ear: but though we have broken the yoke of Britain, and defied the potentates of the earth, we cannot expunge it from our vocabulary. What language is this to a man of the world, claiming independence to his nation:—to a minister of state immersed in the deep systems of political refinement—negotiating with nations improved by arts, erudition, and experience:—standing on the zenith of reputation, amidst the splendor of greatness, the glare of pomp, and mounted to the pinnacle of ambition!

But when I address the Ambassador, I do not forget that I am writing to the philosopher, who is sensible of the precarious basis of national, or personal greatness; who knows that one may again become *dependent* by causes unseen—and the other, obscure from the fickleness of his fellow men. I think he has philosophy enough to contrast the rational simplicity and the quiet delights of his little Villa at the foot of Penn's Hill, with the briliancy of the birth right or the parade of office, and find the latter sink in the comparison when tried by the feelings of reason, and not by the rivalry of pride.

Adieu, says your respectful friend
M Warren

MWP1

84 TO DOROTHY QUINCY HANCOCK

[Despite the sharp differences between JW and John Hancock, and despite MOW's own scorching characterization of him in a previous letter as an "idol of Straw," she nevertheless reaches out to Hancock's wife in her grief over the loss of her son during a skating accident in January 1787.]

Milton [February?] 17[87][1]

None but the parent who has wept over the tomb of an amiable son, can pour the tear of condolence with equal sympathy into the bosom of those recently wounded by a similar stroke. Yet who shall say to the sovereign of time, why hast thou done thus? Not surely man, who stumbles at the threshhold of Deity, and whose ideas are too circumscribed to fathom the smallest part of the system of divine oeconomy. In the first pangs of severe affliction, language cannot console, nor reasoning hush the tumults of a soul pierced deep by a severe and unexpected stroke. This reflection forbids a more early attempt to soften grief too recent, and too big, to admit of consolation, until the healing hand of time has a little worn down the poignancy of passion, hushed the emotions of nature and given leisure to the mind to collect itself;—then may friendship step forward and lend its aid to restore tranquility under the guidance of religion, which points to superior power for relief. When we feel the bitterness of sudden seperation from those we hold dear as our own souls,—how apt are we to cry out,—"surely no sorrow is like my sorrow."

Neither reason or religion forbids us to weep either the darling boy on whom your eyes enraptured hung, or to sigh over the Urn[?] of the youth whose virtues, more matured, promised consolation at the period when the world generally sinks into its own insufficiency to give happiness, to creatures for immortality. But—are we not in danger while nature bends beneath a weight of woe, of arraigning the wisdom and equity of divine decisions, without whose permission not a sparrow falls?

We must certainly be convinced, that he who sets at the helm—and with one broad view looks through the whole of our existence, is the best judge, whither it would enhance the sum[?] of their felicity, if our children were permitted to run through a length of years and temptations or

whether best they should be safely deposited in the grave, before the imbecility of childhood might reopen into immoralities, more painful than the hand of death, to the parent heart that wafts its wishes for the felicity of their children through the regions of eternity.

But it is not easy while nature and duty lead us to cherish the attachment, and ever filial smile strengthen affection, and expands our hopes, to consign to the dust the blooming joys which gladden the present moment, and give the promise of future friendship, from connexions that are under no temptation to deceive.

We clasp the phantom of a moment, and fondly call it our own without considering the slender tenure by which we hold or that the donor of the rich blessing may see the necessity of an early resumption, from the very circumstance, of our too strong attachment.

M^rs^ Hancock was a last witness of the languid sigh of a virtuous youth, who left his native clime with the hope of protracting a life, that would have done honour to his friends, and his country.[2] I have reason to suppose she felt a tender pang for the maternal breast, agitated by so trying a scene. This event, the seperation and death of my amiable Charles, with a long experience of the vicissitudes of human life, has moulded a heart [??] naturally disposed to soften affliction; to mix its tears, and to endeavour to offer consolation to similar distress.

Perhaps the parents mourning the premature death of their only hope, have few friends more ready to pour balm into the wounded bosom, than some who they do not often meet.

Though many personal compliments are paid us, yet the world is too ready to turn its back on the face of sorrow, after the customary attentions are observed, and the mourners are left to find consolation in themselves, or from an higher source.—Happy is it for man that while human friendships are too weak, and philosophy insufficient to support the drooping mind, religion leads us to the font of compassion, and shews us the great father of spirits offering his benificent hand to dissipate the cloud, when the divine designation has been met with the fortitude of the Christian,—when it has answered its purpose,—when we have drank the cup of affliction with becoming dignity and resignation.

M^r^ Warren unites with me in sincere condolence on the death of the lovely boy, suddenly snatched from the fond eyes that cannot cease to weep

the absence of those lisping accents of filial affection, that pierce the parental heart on every recollection.

M^r and M^rs Hancock must both be sensible that no motive but the dictates of a heart taught to feel for the sorrow of others, by too often looking into the grave for its associates, would have urged an interruption in this moment of deep affliction, from their truly sympathizing friend—
M Warren

MWP1

1. Letterbook draft reads, "177," as if for a date in 1770s, but George Washington Hancock (b. 1778) died on January 27, 1787.

2. Dorothy Hancock must have seen Charles in Boston, before his fateful voyage to Spain, in 1785.

85 TO CATHARINE SAWBRIDGE MACAULAY GRAHAM

[Following the Constitutional Convention in Philadelphia in the summer of 1787, the Warrens found themselves on the defensive and joined other Antifederalists in opposing ratification. To that end, MOW composed a lengthy essay, *Observations on the New Constitution, and on the Federal and State Conventions. By a Columbian Patriot*, that circulated in print in early 1788 and laid out many of her reasons for opposition, including the lack of a bill of rights. Although her own state of Massachusetts, after great debate, voted in favor in the very month her essay appeared, she hoped *Observations* might influence the discussion in New York. In the following letter, she faces the very real possibility of losing on this issue—which of course she would in June 1788 once the necessary ten states had approved the new Constitution.]

Milton December 18^th 1787

In my last I gave no opinion relative to the adoption of the system of government offered by the late convention at Philadelphia. At present there appears little doubt that more than nine states will agree to ratify, and without amendments accept it *in toto*.

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Some of the best friends to the liberties of America and the most distinguished of her patriots have opposed it with energy, as offered to the public: though many of them think it may be so amended as to answer every purpose of a salutary, strong, and respectable government.

Pennsylvania, the Delaware counties, New Jersey, Georgia, and Connecticut, have already adopted the proposed system, even without hinting at the necessity of any amendments. Massachusetts and Maryland have also ratified the doings of the convention, though they have given a list of *necessary alterations*: but they have not made this the condition of their acceptance. New Hampshire has met and adjourned on a pretty equal division: in Rhode Island the plan is rejected by five sixths of the people: the Carolinas will come[?] in, Virginia and New York are still doubtful, but most probably will accede.

Thus stands the system: how it will operate must be left to time. I hope it will be so modified and corrected, as to be productive of unanimity and every other good effect.

If you madam have seen the [??] publications we must appear to you a very divided people. Those who stile themselves *Federalists* are perhaps less fond of harmony than the class stigmatized with the appellation of Anti-Federalists. The last wish for a union of the states on the free principles of the late confederation; while the first are for the consolidation of a strong government on any or no principles:—and are for supporting it by force at the risque of distorting the fairest features in the political face of America.

Perhaps your curiosity may be excited to inquire who are the principal characters in the several states who have had the courage to oppose a system, that a majority in most of the state conventions have approved, and that a considerable party are enthusiastically mad to support at every hazard.

I give you a list of a few names—Lowndes, Laurens, Gadsden, in South Carolina;—Martin, Chase, and others in Maryland; Governor Randolph, P. Henry the late Governor; the whole family of the Lee's and many other respectable characters in Virginia; Judge Byron, and many gentleman of ability and distinction in Pennsylvania;—Govenor Clinton, two of the delegates who were of the federal convention, and many others in New York;—your friend General Warren and Mr Gerry who also was one of the convention in the Massachusetts.[1]

I take the liberty to transmit to you the reasons of dissent from the majority in the Pennsylvania convention, the proposed amendments of Massachusetts and Maryland, a pamphlet circulated in the Massachusetts immediately on their ratification and a few addresses to the public previous thereto under the signature Helvidius Priscus.[2]

Thus I have given you a slight sketch of the state of parties in this country. Human nature is too often vilified by some and depreciated by others; but I think the times we have lived in are not the most favourable to the noblest feelings of the soul. Old attachments have been eradicated by the diversity of political opinion: animosities heightened by the severity or indiscretion of parties; new political connexions formed as it were by accident without any principle of public or private virtue for their basis.

A fondness for honorary distinctions, has arisen among us which calls for an hereditary monarchy for their support: and a taste for expensive pleasure reigns while the public treasures are empty and the private finances low. A combination of other incidental circumstances has involved this generation in a mist ascending from the pit of Avarice and led them to the chimerical pursuit of the *Golden fleece* of the poets which some think and perhaps may find deposited with the fabricators of the new government.

If you wish to know more of the present ideas of your friend and the consequences apprehended from the hasty adoption of the new form of government, I will whisper you—you may find them at large in the subjoined manuscripts I now enclose with a printed pamphlet entitled the Columbian Patriot[3] by the same hand. I am madam as ever your affectionately

M Warren

MWP1

1. MOW lists many of the key Antifederalists: Rawlins Lowndes, Henry Laurens, and Christopher Gadsden of South Carolina; Luther Martin and Samuel Chase of Maryland; Edmund Randolph, Patrick Henry, Richard Henry Lee, and Arthur Lee of Virginia; Samuel Bryan of Pennsylvania; George Clinton of New York; and of course JW and Elbridge Gerry of Massachusetts. They all feared unfettered power in the hands of a central government and thus the conditions for the "tyranny" they had just fought to overthrow.

2. Helvidius Priscus, the name of a first-century Roman Stoic, was the pen name of JW for an Antifederalist essay he published in the *Boston Independent Chronicle* on December 27, 1787.

3. Pseudonym used by MOW for her Antifederalist pamphlet, which was disseminated largely to the New York convention, as yet undecided on the Constitution.

86 TO JOHN ADAMS

[At the time of the following letter, the Warrens had moved back to Plymouth, John Adams had been chosen as vice president, and MOW was feeling defensive about the family's lack of influence in a Federalist-dominated era.]

Plymouth May 8th 1789

Sir,

Presuming on the confidential and unremitting friendship that has long subsided between us,—grounded on the close connexion commenced with Mr Warren in the early part of your life,—I again address you, without waiting an answer to my last. According to your usual punctuality, I doubt not that will be done, as soon as the peculiar engagements which have lately occupied your attention (the etiquette of the *entre public* and the consequent ceremonies) are a little over.

I do not mean to flatter the most virtuous or the most elevated character, but I must tell you Sir, I have always had so high an opinion of a friendship founded on the purest principles, strengthened by mutual confidence, and exertion in every patriotic measure, and increased by a thousand circumstances of fiery trial in the arduous struggle for the Liberties of America, that I could never imagine a diminution on the one side, or a failure of friendship on the other, could take place between yourself and Mr Warren.

You Sir, have successfully surmounted all impediments:—you have reached the *acma* of applause, and are placed in a situation to do eminent service to your Country, to establish your own family, and to assist most essentially your friends without injury to yourself, your family, or your country.

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General Warren has been unfortunately the butt of party malice, headed by a man[1] I know you justly and heartily despise. By his machinations, aided by others of like description, and for obvious reasons, they have destroyed the public influence of a gentleman who has an equal claim from his country with any one,—that is if attachment and integrity, industry and probity, can justify that claim.

You have heard his character most injuriously traduced, but Mr Adams is the last man in the United States, who I should suppose would listen to the misrepresentation or be impressed by the calumnies of open or disguised enemies, to the prejudice of an old and tried *friend*. A friend whose zeal or whose principles you never could suspect, though you have known his undisguised sentiments much better than any man among the various combinations, who have stuck at no false chord to prostrate his political character. Perhaps no other person has for many years possessed so great a share of his confidence as yourself. Is it possible that you could have listened to tales too ridiculous for refutation?

The vindictive spirit of his enemies, not sufficiently gratified by their too successful efforts against the father, have endeavoured to wound in a still more tender part, by leveling their envenomed shaft at the reputation of a son. Was it proper to call your attention at this time to private objects, I could give you a curious detail of facts relative to his affairs;—yet, I could scarce believe it possible that your Excellency should give as a reason for declining to support his interest, *a fear of injuring your own popularity*.

None of my family are soliciting at Court,[2]—if they were, would it not have been your duty to have supported the interest of the children of your friend? Mr Adams could have nothing to alledge against them, but scurrilities, which he must have received from persons to whom he should have given no credit. If he was frequently in company with such persons—it must be presumed it was on account of their fortune and accidental *rank* which gave them the *honour*. Your penetration should have led you to discover at least three causes of rancourous enmity in these people against Mr W W——,[3] viz. a difference in political opinion—an unhappy but necessary quarrel with a wealthy, flagitious villain,—and his failure in his mercantile pursuits.

I am not governed by maternal predilections, but I cannot suppose you could for a moment believe that my son joined in the rebellion against a government which his family were so instrumental in establishing.

You will be sensible on a short recollection whence these reflections have arisen. I would yet Sir, consider a late conversation (as repeated to me) in the most favourable light.

This is a very free letter, but where I have been used to write and converse with the simplicity of truth, and the unreserved confidential esteem, neither rank, nor station, nor time will check the disposition to throw open the volume of the soul:—more especially where candour has formerly beheld its contents with the most favourable eye. I shall only lock myself up in reserve towards him, when I am fully convinced there is no stability in human friendships, by Mr Adams's defection from such friend as I know he has possessed from early life in General Warren.

What I have mentioned above is from a sense of justice, it is my duty;—it is justice I should exercise towards any person, however unconnected, was I equally assured of their merits—and their maltreatment.

You will Sir, excuse my detaining you thus long—you know the sensibility of my too feeling heart has been awakened on many trying occasions. Nor may this be a subject totally uninteresting to yourself so fluctuating is the popular voice—and so replete with vicissitude are all human affairs, that those whose *commanding good fortune* now augers no change for the worse, may contemplate in some solemn hour, the injustice, ingratitude, and abuse, experienced by themselves which has been felt before by their friends.

I am respected Sir, your sincere well wisher—
M Warren

MWP1

1. Note in letterbook draft reads, "Governor Hancock." MOW refers here to the bitter contentions between JW and John Hancock.

2. As indicated in previous letters, Adams had criticized MOW for seeking favors for her sons.

3. WW's reputation had suffered when he was arrested in 1786 for unpaid debt; he incurred several setbacks in business and lived a rather irresponsible life, in spite of his parents' hopes for his future. See Jeffrey H. Richards, *Mercy Otis Warren* (New York: Twayne, 1995), 17–19.

87 TO CATHARINE SAWBRIDGE MACAULAY GRAHAM

Plymouth July 1789

My Dear Madam,

As I cannot excuse myself, I will not attempt an apology for thus long neglecting an answer to your favour of the twenty ninth October, one thousand seven hundred eighty eight. I feel mortified at my own delay as it has doubtless prevented me the pleasure of hearing from a very valuable and much esteemed friend, whom, nor time, nor distance, or the accidents of life will lead me to view with an indifferent eye. But though we may feel an immutable attachment, yet we live in an age of revolution when not only the most extraordinary political events are exhibited; but the most sudden reverse of private friendship and a dereliction of former attachments at once surprizes and wounds the heart, disposed to cultivate the social and benevolent affections, to the last moment of existence.

The old Republicans who have uniformly adhered to their free and independent principles, seem to be the devoted victims of various parties. They are neglected by their less principled but more fortunate associates—who for a time struggled with them for the security of liberty, and the inherent rights of man. They are feared by the ardent and aspiring spirits, the sticklers for monarchy and the young adventurers for aristocratic distinctions. They are dreaded by the intriguers for place, [??] titles, and standing armies as impediments to their road to ambition. They are despised by the wealthy sons of fortune who by speculation and *peculation*, have without education or name just leaped into affluence, and who have no ideas of *merit* except the brilliancy of the drawing room or the trappings of their horses. They are ridiculed by the dissipated and licentious as bigots to private virtue, religion, and public liberty: and hated by the old Tories for their magnanimity in opposition to the encroachments of Britain.

Thus from the instability of the human character, I have learned to expect every thing, and to fear nothing beneath the Supreme Being. Why should we, if we feel a firmness of mind that renders us independent of popular opinion, of political changes, of the versatility of individuals in high office or the absurd enthusiasm that often spreads itself over the lower classes of life? Do you remember the pleasant morning when you came out from Boston and breakfasted with me at Milton? All nature looked gay and peace pervaded the land; you was delighted with the cheerful faces,

and independent countenances, you met on your way; but I recollect you observed you could scarcely forbear weeping over my country when you surveyed its present happiness, and at the same time saw a disposition in many to trifle away its advantages so recently and so dearly purchased. If you was here now my dear madam perhaps the tear would be indulged.

But I forbear to give a further portrait: you will judge from more public accounts of the present moral, and political situation of a country, whose magnanimity, valour, and virtue, have made her an object of curiosity throughout the world.

It is true we have now a government organized and a Washington at its head;—but we are too poor for Monarchy, too wise for Despotism, and too dissipated, selfish, and extravagant for Republicanism. It ill becomes an infant government whose foreign and domestic arrearages are large, and whose recourses are small, to begin its career in the splendour of Royalty: to shackle its commerce, to check their manufactures, to damp the spirits of agriculture by imposts, and excises, and in short to deprive the people of the means of subsistence, to amass sums for the payment of exorbitant salaries, to support the regalia of office and to keep up the ostentatious pomp for which the ambitious have sighed and desired from the moment of the institution of the order of *Cincinnati*.

I leave America to wait the success of her bold experiment and wonder a moment with you at the astonishing revolution in France. Would it not be surprizing if that nation should reap greater advantages of the spirit of liberty lately diffused through this continent than Americans themselves may be able to boast; after all their successes and their struggles to become a free people? But I dare not pronounce, I only retrospect the past, and contemplate the probabilities of futurity. So various are the parties, the interests, and the principles, that no human calculation can decide on the fate of America or France.

The restless nature of man is ever kindling a fire and collecting fuel to keep the flame alive, that consumes one half the globe without the smallest advantage to the other in a moral, and seldom in a political view. Mankind profit little by the experience or observation of others. It is with nations as with individuals: they must try their own projects: and sometimes learn wisdom by their mistakes.

Liberty delights the ear and tickles the fond pride of man, but it is a jewel much oftner the plaything of his imagination than a possession of

real stability. If he acquires it to day he will perhaps convince the world tomorrow that he knows not how to make a proper use thereof—and probably will barter it the next hour as a useless bauble to the first officious master that will take the burthen from his shoulders.

Are you madam writing the history of American affairs for the last twenty years as is reported? If you are I shall be happy to see it;—if you are not you shall have the annals in two or three volumes collected,[1] if life is spared by your friend and
Humble Servt
M Warren

MWP1

1. MOW's history of the Revolution, a work in three volumes that would not appear until 1805, fourteen years after Catharine Macaulay Graham's death.

88 TO JAMES WARREN

[On March 24, JW departed Massachusetts for New York, the seat of the new federal government, in order to secure compensation he felt he was owed for his several years as a member of the Navy Board for the Eastern Department. It is quite possible he made one last effort to secure government positions for his sons. He returned in May, apparently unsuccessful at both missions.]

Plimouth March 29 1790

I this morning received yours of the 21 and 24th Instant & might exact all my patience to wait the posts since at York when I hope I shall receive letters replete with chearful expectation of a safe return after an absence too long for my affection & my feelings, yet depend upon it I behave very well & keep up my spirits remarkably. Why should I not? I have many blessings & all have been long crowned with the company & conversation of the best of friends. This absence was necessary & I have some confidence in providence & trust that neither you nor your family will regret this journey, though a little disagreable in the beginning. I am more anxious for your health than anything yet the journey may be advantageous [??] in that aspect. I anticipate the pleasure I think you will receive[?] in your progress

real stability. If he acquires it to day he will perhaps convince the world tomorrow that he knows not how to make a proper use thereof—and probably will barter it the next hour as a useless bauble to the first officious master that will take the burthen from his shoulders.

Are you madam writing the history of American affairs for the last twenty years as is reported? If you are I shall be happy to see it;—if you are not you shall have the annals in two or three volumes collected,[1] if life is spared by your friend and
Humble Servt
M Warren

MWP1

1. MOW's history of the Revolution, a work in three volumes that would not appear until 1805, fourteen years after Catharine Macaulay Graham's death.

88 TO JAMES WARREN

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home in a pleasanter season, even if you are not successful in your bussiness, but I have not the least doubt you will be partially so if not fully, but be that as it will, you will have done your duty & what can man do more? We will be contented & gratful to the end of our race.

The weather is here cold, raw, & gloomy, but I am very well, keep close within doors. My books & my pen are all my amusement but when it grows a little warm shall crawl, or rather play cat with the spring birds.

April 2d

I contemplate you now in the bustle & [??] of the great city where I hope you will find more pleasure than you expected & as much success as you wish. I find to my surprise every body knows your business in its full extent. Many will be sorry & I suppose some will rejoice if you do not succeed, but I have no Idea that you will not in some shape or other. A certain young man must be wretched if you do not—to be longer Idle in this Idle place is dreadful—yet he keeps up tolerable good spirits.

I long to hear from you & to hear that you are well & chearful. If you are we shall do very well here till you return and much better afterwards.

My expectations & hopes—my experience of the past goodness of providence & confidence in its future support gives me tranquil days & closes my lids peacefully at night. I am indeed very well, so do not let your mind suffer the smallest anxiety on my account.

Politics—I hear little off & care less about. We have suffered too much by [??] attentions to the public weal ever again to be solicitous for modes, forms, or consequences of governmental systems—yet curiosity in some measure be kept awake & if not interrupted by public injustice or private vexation, the manuvers of polititions & the ligitations of speculators & asurers[1] may be some amusement.

I believe you have done very well indeed with regard to a certain publication.[2] You observe much fortitude is necessary after such a plunge on the sea of public opinion, but I some how or other feel very easy as to that matter. I have lived too long to be much affected by anything the world can say either of person or productions.

I enclose a copy of a Dedication. When you have perused it you will let me know your opinion exactly therof as it will not be too late to suppress or alter a month or two hence as I imagine the work will not appear immediately.

Hindered this afternoon by company. I finish by candle light which is a reason sufficient for saying no more even had this been only one instead of two folio[?] pages from your affectionate Wife,
M Warren

MWP2, RC

1. By "ligitations" it is unclear whether she means "litigations" or something else. As for "asurers" she might mean anything from usurers to assurers (another word for insurers).

2. MOW's *Poems, Dramatic and Miscellaneous.* The Dedication, despite her swearing in an earlier letter she would not do it, is to George Washington.

89 TO GEORGE WASHINGTON

[In May 1790, MOW's first book of belles lettres, *Poems, Dramatic and Miscellaneous*, appeared from the press of Isaiah Thomas in Boston. The volume includes many, but not all, of the poems she wrote for friends and family or that appeared occasionally in newspapers, as well as her two previously unpublished verse dramas, *The Ladies of Castile* and *The Sack of Rome*. The letters immediately following reflect this project.]

Plimouth May 18 1790

Sir,

Though it is my wish to prefix the inclosed dedication to a volume prepared for the press I would not take this liberty without first asking your permission. The work contains two Tragedies and some miscellaneous pieces written several years hence. A subscription has been activated[?] & it will be commited to the press as soon as I have the honour of your reply.

Most unfeignedly Sir have your friends at Plimouth been affected by hearing of your late severe illness. God grant a restoration & perfect confirmation of Health to a gentleman on whose life the most important consequences may depend.

Mr Warren unites with me in the most respectful regards to yourself & lady. He has been very ill since his return as he was during the whole of his residence at new York. This circumstance prevented him the pleasure of

Hindered this afternoon by company. I finish by candle light which is a reason sufficient for saying no more even had this been only one instead of two folio[?] pages from your affectionate Wife,
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paying that particular attention to Mrs Washington that both friendship & politeness dictated. An apology also for myself is due to her for introducing a son as the bearer of a letter but an accident impeded his journey to New York & consequently the honour of a personal attendance.

Give me leave Sir to subscribe most respectfully & and sincerely
Your most obedient
M Warren[1]

Library of Congress, RC

1. Below MOW's signature, the text reads, "the president of the united states."

90 TO WINSLOW WARREN

April 25 1791

My Dear Winslow,

In yours received yesterday you give not the smallest intimation when I may expect to see you, nor what are the arrangments for the summer, but I hope your next will contain many particulars which I wish to know. You have promissed two or three hours from your *many engagements* to converse with your parents. I hope for much information therfrom but should be happier if you could do it personally.

Your Brother Henry is gone to the Eastward in poor health & not in very good spirits. I pity him exceedingly but cannot help him. He has for a long time been the child of disappointment. Is it not very extraordinary that he should be passed over notwithstanding the respectable recommendations in his favour and additional offices & Emoluments confered on the little insignificant, virulent, worthless bankrupt in our neighborhood? Surely a Collectorship alone is much more than he could ever expect either from his family or character, nor has he any claim of merit except the ignorant frivollity of a dupe to the new government.[1]

Why did you intimate a dislike to make a visit at Cambridge? Have you any particular reasons of disgust?

I have read Mrs Macauleys observations. I like them much—but can judge better when I have seen the *philipic*. She is certainly a very superior woman and so cannot but think Burke has discovered an inconsistency unworthy of his great abillities and that will in the opinions of the liberal

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tarnish his former fine strokes of oratory in favour of the rights of human nature—but it is possible a young officer of a *standing army* may view things in a different light from what he did when he was a warm advocate for the Establishment of a free government. If that is the case, what will be the fate of the *History* when the author is no more?[2] But this is a subject I hope we shall have opportunity to discuss hereafter.

What have you done with all my manuscripts you took with you to peruse at Kennebeck?—[3]

The next question is are we likely to hear a good [??]? I really suffer for the want of one.

Your Father has been very unwell ever since his return from Boston and for this reason leaves all the writing at this time to your very affectionate Mother,
M Warren

MWP2, RC

1. By "Eastward" MOW means Maine, then still a part of Massachusetts and the home of Henry's brother George. MOW continues to mention Henry's failure to obtain the post of Collector of Customs for Plymouth, a political appointment.

2. MOW has just received a copy of Catharine Macaulay Graham's *Observations on the Reflections of the Right Hon. Edmund Burke* (London, C. Dilly, 1790). (For more on this work, see the headnote to L 92.) In order to extract WW from his debts and legal difficulties, the Warrens did manage to get him an appointment to the army as a junior officer. He is now in uniform—and thus an instrument of what many Antifederalists feared would result from the Constitution, a standing army. She expresses a mock fear that he will turn from her side to the side of power—that is, that he will become a Federalist—and thus be unable to appreciate her Antifederalist history of the Revolution.

3. Probably manuscripts of MOW's history of the Revolution, although that is not certain.

91 TO WINSLOW WARREN

Plimouth May 22 1791

My Dear Son,

We have not a word from you since the 15th instant. Robbins is just arrived by whom I hoped to heave heard, though perhaps had you have written you could not have given much consolation to one "whom the Lord hath called as a woman forsaken & grieved in spirit *afflicted*, *tossed with tempest & not comforted*."[1]

The great mr Otis used often to say that in his deepest affliction he could always open to something in the *sacred pages* adapted to the particular exigence & that seemed to be spoken to his soul: I have often thought of the observation & often have derived comfort from the same source, but was never more forcefully affected than with the passage transcribed above; when I found it immediately, followed by this: "thy children shall be all taught of the *lord, and great shall be the peace of thy children*."[2]

In this hope I will compose my own soul, but with what language shall I give comfort to yours in this hour of adversity, or have you firmness sufficient to smile at the wayward strokes that are usually called the frolics of Fortune and wait with becoming fortitude till her capricious hand shall beckon you to her flowery feilds?

I am persuaded the tide will set in your favour ere long: my greatest apprehention at present is that your confinement & perhaps your anxiety may injure your health, but when I count up the days & the hours, I take courage that more than a fourth part of the time is already elapsed when the time you seem to be sure of relief will arrive, but I think your sufferings will be melliorated before the 20th of june. It is the opinion of every one I have heard mention it that the court will take up your case as soon as they must.

If they do nothing it will be a tacit but shameful relinquishment of all claims to act independently on the General Goverment, though it may involve the citizens of the state in endless thraldom.

I feel very impatient to be with you. I have much to say that I cannot write & have a thousand sentiments of Resentment & indignation that I dare not express.

Why did you leave sullivan? Is he not your friend, or did you feel a want of confidence in his advice?

I suppose your Brother has not yet arrived or we should have heard from you by the several persons who got here from Boston within the two last days. This is to go by Sprat[?] the cariage driver with whom I do not know but I should have taken passage to morrow had you not intimated that you did not wish it untill *after* the 28th of june.[3] What if I should send by him a few cakes? Would you laugh at trivial presents? No, you will you say my mamah thinks I have every thing I need to eat or to drink except some little matter that no one but a mother would think off. Indeed I taste nothing but I wish you a partaker nor are you a single moment from my mind.

It has been a considerable tryal the week past to exert that due degree of equanimity which I know is expected from me. I could not intirely seclude myself from company as I wished & have reason to suppose my conduct on this occassion has fell under the observation & been frequently the discussion of Friends & Foes.

But though painful to me to go through the honours of the table your father thought it best to ask the gentlemen of the supreme Court to dine with us. We had them yesterday with some other company, and they appeared really gratified by this mark of attention. I believe it was quite right—but am glad to be still this day & to have no matters of Etiquette to regulate the ensuing week.

Your father has not wrote nor does he often speak. I need not point you to the subjects of his contemplation. You know us both too well. You have observed his feelings as a father & you know the tenderness of your Mother,
M Warren

P.S. Your father has just written. He laughs at me for the Idea of sending cakes to you but if it would make you smile, it would be gratification enough to me whether you eat them or not. I think it probably you have all those things in abundance. Tell me what you have not—[4]

MWP2, RC

1. Isaiah 54:6a and 54:11a.

2. Isaiah 54:13.

3. Although WW was by now a lieutenant in the Second Regiment of the U.S. Army, he was also an escapee from justice in Connecticut and had been jailed in Massachusetts. He presented a petition to the Massachusetts legislature arguing that he be allowed "freedom

of the yard" even as a federal prisoner. After much debate, the legislature passed the bill in late June, which had the practical effect of keeping him from behind bars. Shortly afterward, WW would set out with the army under General Arthur St. Clair for Ohio.

4. Following the postscript, letter reads, "No 3 / To Mr Warren."

92 TO CATHARINE SAWBRIDGE MACAULAY GRAHAM

[Edmund Burke's *Reflections on the Revolution in France* had first appeared in Britain in 1789, with other editions in 1790. By 1791, Burke's critique of the French Revolution was circulating in the United States and finding concurrence among the Federalists, who made no secret of their continuing love for their former masters and antipathy for their wartime allies. Burke had been answered by the Whig historian Catharine Macaulay Graham in a pamphlet entitled *Observations on the Reflections of the Right Hon. Edmund Burke* and published in England in 1790. MOW acknowledges her receipt of Graham's pamphlet.]

Plymouth May 31st 1791

I have my dear madam been particularly obliged by two of your favours since I have taken up my pen to write to my friend.[1] Were I fully to express my sentiments with regard to your letters on education and on your learned and metaphysical disquisitions, you might think they savoured of flattery. This is a fault not less despised by myself than it is detested by a lady whose talents, set her very much above it.

I will therefore only say, I was entertained and delighted with the volume and pleased that you had taken up your pen on subjects so important: nor was I less gratified with the manner of executing the design. I have since been obliged by your ingenious and just observations on Mr. Burke's strictures on the national assembly of France. What an inconsistent creature is man!

I am sorry for the sake of the human character, that a gentleman whose oratorical powers have been so often so honourably employed and exerted in favour of the rights of society, should so far deviate from the principles he has supported, as to vilify the advocates for freedom, and to abuse characters that have discovered more firmness and consistency than himself,

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yet his celebrated pamphlet may be productive of good, both to Europe and to America.[2] It appears to me that it will lead to the discussion of questions that have for some time lain dormant, and to the revival and vindication of opinions that have of late been too unfashionable to avow.

Even some Americans who have fought for their country and been instrumental in her emancipation from a foreign yoke, seem to be at war with every Democratic principle:—and some men of genius, professed republicans, who formerly shared the confidence of the people, are now become the advocates for Monarchy and all the trappings of Royalty. *The British constitution* is the idol of their warmest devotion and they daily sigh for *Patrician rank*, hereditary titles, stars, garters, and nobility, with all the insignia of arbitrary sway.

Thus from age to age, are the people coaxed, cheated, or bullied until the hood-winked multitude set their own seal to a renunciation of their priviledges, and with their own hand rivet the chains of servitude on their posterity.

This is a painful reflection to the patriot in retirement and the philosopher in his closet: but when we consider it is the usual course of human conduct, one is almost led to assent to the Federal creed lately established in America. First that mankind are incapable of the enjoyment of liberty; second that the mass of the people have not the capacity nor the right to choose their own master; therefore the game of deception must be played over and over to mislead their judgment and work on their enthusiasm until by the assent, *hereditary crowns* and distinctions are fixed, when their posterity may load the authors thereof with as many curses, as now daily fall on the first *Federal head* who it is said conveyed an hereditary taint to all succeeding generations.[3]

Yet it is my opinion the commotions in France will check the designs of certain characters, about the *American Court*: and for a time keep them within some bounds of moderation and perhaps awake the vigilance of others, so far as to keep in awe those who are buzzing for a crown for their President and hereditary titles, lordships, and revenues for his ministers and favourites.[4]

You will direct to me in future at Plymouth, where we are again happily fixed, I believe for the remainder of life. For though the pleasant mount where you visited us has many charms in the softer season of the year, yet view it through all its changes, I think Plymouth by far the most eligible

residence. I wish I could flatter myself with the idea of once seeing my friend here. I am sure she would enjoy her visit in higher degree than she did at Milton. I have always felt more happy in this place where I have a little social circle around me, than I did in my residence nearer the Capital. Indeed, I think we should both enjoy a felicity unknown to the interested and unfeeling part of mankind, if we could spend a few days together in the pleasant little village of Plymouth, beneath the shade of retirement amid philosophical contemplation.

But this is a pleasure I contemplate as within the chapter of possibilities, rather than as a probable event; therefore I do not indulge even the pleasing anticipation which makes so considerable a part of the happiness enjoyed by mortals. But if an interview with my friend before the race of mortality is closed, must not take place, yet let the interchange of letters be frequent while ability is lent to *grasp* the pen.

I hope you have received a small packet from *Dilly*; if the amusements of some of leisure hours should meet your approbation, I should be highly gratified. The volume I know will be read by you Madam with candour, if not partiality.[5] What the critics may say I know not—but sensible many a hapless reputation has been wrecked on the ocean of public opinion, I have endeavoured to arm myself with fortitude either to ride out the storm or to see my little shallop stranded on the quicksands of neglect.

I am my dear madam with unalterable esteem your very sincere friend,
M Warren

MWP1

1. It is not entirely clear to which letters MOW refers. She wrote to Graham on December 18, 1787; Graham replied in March 1788 and sent another letter dated October 29, 1788. MOW wrote again to Graham in July 1789; one of the missives from Graham must have included her pamphlet, which MOW mentions receiving.

2. The "gentleman" is of course Edmund Burke, one the parliamentary supporters of America in the colonial struggle with Great Britain and thought by Whigs in the United States to be a warm supporter of republicanism. His *Reflections on the Revolution in France*, to which MOW refers, caught radical republicans like MOW by surprise; therefore, Graham's response was seen as a valuable counter to Burke's criticism of the French upheaval. MOW was instrumental in the American publication by Thomas and Andrews in Boston, 1791, and wrote a preface for that edition.

3. By "Federal head," MOW means the biblical Adam, with the obvious pun on the Federal Party.

4. The persons to whom MOW refers are probably Alexander Hamilton and John Adams, although she corresponded with both during this period.

5. MOW has sent Graham a copy of *Poems. Dramatic and Miscellaneous.* Dilly is a London bookseller and publisher.

93 TO JAMES WARREN JR.

[In July 1791 WW set out with his regiment for a march through New England and Pennsylvania into western Ohio under General Arthur St. Clair on a mission from Washington's government to punish the Indians there for their continued allegiance to the British and hostility to American settlement. In the early morning of November 4, 1791, the U.S. Army was attacked by a combined force of Native warriors from many area tribes under the direction of the Miami chieftain, Little Turtle. In one of the worst defeats of an American army at the hands of Native Americans, Winslow was killed, making him MOW's second son to die. The next two letters express some fragment of the grief she must have felt at the loss of her favorite.]

Plimouth [December] 28 1791[1]

[I] have not been able to take up my pen for many days, and now it trembles in my hand while I wish to speak comfort to my son while he weeps for himself, for his parents, & for the loss of a most amiable brother. Alas! What shall I say in the anguish of my heart? I must be silent & not open my mouth because the Lord hath done this:—my only consolation is my belief in and my reliance on the providence of an infinitely wise, just, & beneficent being who has a right to resume the choicest of his gifts in his own time and manner. What is man that he should complain! Yet nature revells at the premature separation & the heart of the mother bends to the tomb—that wraps in silence her Charles and her Winslow.

I will write you again when able: the bearer waits for this:—but I must relieve you so far as to tell you your father is in usual health & bears this last stroke of affliction like *himself*—like the philosopher & the Christian.

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Your Brother Henry is as well as when you were here & your mother not sick. God grant the continuance of those Blessings with the addition of life, health, & happiness to yourself, & your dear & valuable brother at Kenebeck.[2]

Most affectionately subscribe in tears, your mother, while she fervantly wishes to say *amen* to the will of Heaven & ever to seal this desire of submission with the signature of

M. Warren

P.S. Your father has this fine morning for the first time within a fortnight been prevailed upon to mount his horse & ride: was he here he would have something to say to you but you know his paternal tenderness towards you. Henry is also absent.

MWP2, RC[3]

1. This RC is dated "october," but MOW clearly means December. The error may indicate the degree to which her son's death has affected her.

2. I.e., George.

3. MWP1 has a similar version of this letter, no doubt copied from this one.

94 TO JANET LIVINGSTON MONTGOMERY

Plymouth April 1792

My dear Friend

While in an agony of soul I this day weep the loss of an amiable accomplished son, whose fillial piety was enhanced by the many amiable qualities that adorned the sensible judicious friend, I turned my mind to your loss, to your affliction, and to your letters;—my design was to look over your last and to endeavour to compose my spirits to make some proper reply to the sympathising accents contained therein; but I accidentally laid my hand on one of an older date in which you observe, "what but the expectations beyond the grave can ever make me smile in the midst of grief;—what make me suffer life after *my Soldiers* fall, but the blessed flattering hope of meeting him again"?

In addition to this hope my dear madam, I have still a friend, the best of friends, the best of husbands and other amiable and very meritorious children, to attach me to life. Yet my weak my affectionate heart constantly

Your Brother Henry is as well as when you were here & your mother not sick. God grant the continuance of those Blessings with the addition of life, health, & happiness to yourself, & your dear & valuable brother at Kenebeck.[2]

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P.S. Your father has this fine morning for the first time within a fortnight been prevailed upon to mount his horse & ride: was he here he would have something to say to you but you know his paternal tenderness towards you. Henry is also absent.

MWP2, RC[3]

1. This RC is dated "october," but MOW clearly means December. The error may indicate the degree to which her son's death has affected her.

2. I.e., George.

3. MWP1 has a similar version of this letter, no doubt copied from this one.

94 TO JANET LIVINGSTON MONTGOMERY

Plymouth April 1792

My dear Friend

While in an agony of soul I this day weep the loss of an amiable accomplished son, whose fillial piety was enhanced by the many amiable qualities that adorned the sensible judicious friend, I turned my mind to your loss, to your affliction, and to your letters;—my design was to look over your last and to endeavour to compose my spirits to make some proper reply to the sympathising accents contained therein; but I accidentally laid my hand on one of an older date in which you observe, "what but the expectations beyond the grave can ever make me smile in the midst of grief;—what make me suffer life after *my Soldiers* fall, but the blessed flattering hope of meeting him again"?

In addition to this hope my dear madam, I have still a friend, the best of friends, the best of husbands and other amiable and very meritorious children, to attach me to life. Yet my weak my affectionate heart constantly

wanders to the dreary wilderness and contemplates the dear remains that lie there without the rights of sepulture;—can you wonder I then weep in the most bitter anguish of soul;—a wound too deep for philosophy to paliate or the hand of time ever to heal. Yet often in the midst of distress that none but a parent can feel, me thinks I see my deceased son with all the graces of person, and the usual, the sweet smile of complacency on his countenance, enter as on former occasions of grief and with a blush of sensibility and tenderness inquire "my dear mama where now is your philosophy"? shall I reply to you my friend that I feel as if it was extinguished by the savage hand that cut down an assemblage of talents, virtues, and abilities, that would but from a series of uncommon misfortunes, have made as useful and as brilliant a figure as any on the stage. By travel, study, and observation he had acquired a thorough knowledge of mankind, was acquainted with life in all its varieties, and struggled with misfortunes with the spirit of a hero and the equanimity of the philosopher.

The supreme governour of the universe lends his fiat to the success of some and frowns on the most laudable efforts of others, through all the page of life for reasons that we cannot investigate while in this vale of tears. I wish to submit in silence to the premature stroke that has removed a son so much the expectation and delight of his friends, I would endeavour to derive consolation from the recollection of his manly fortitude through sufferings, trying indeed to a youth who had ever early promise that the world could give.

Yet as a friend of the celebrated Epaminondas[1] who lost his life in the field of battle, observes, "when local circumstances suddenly occur to my mind with the remembrance of his amiable qualities, an expression which he used on such an occasion, a smile which had escaped him on another, and a thousand minute particulars with which grief loves to nourish its melancholy, and all combining with the insupportable idea, that nothing now remains of this great man but an heap of bones which the earth is incessantly corroding, I am seized with emotion too violent and painful to be endured";—too painful indeed are these recollections for the tender bosom of a mother, who has a thousand times realized this description of Anacharïs and wept in anguish of soul over the scattered relics of her heroic and beloved Winslow.

I wish my dear madam your health and your spirits would permit me to hope for a visit. I think we should be suitable company for each other.

I have scarce set my foot over the threshold of my door since the doleful tidings of the fatal action at the Miami on the fourth of November, I feel as if I wished to see none but those who have tasted affliction; yet I am not ungrateful for blessings still lent. Come on if you can, sit down in solitude, and listen to the voice of sorrow, nothing will sooner aid than your philosophy, (religion, and friendship) to suspend the tear from the weeping eye of your friend
M Warren

MWP1

1. Epamonidas (418–362 BCE), Theban general and political leader, died after his victory over the Spartans at Mantinea and was mourned by his friend. MOW got this from Plutarch or Xenophon.

95 TO HENRY WARREN

Plimouth Feb. 10th 1793

My son Henry can never suppose that the delay of a letter in his absence can arise from any inattention in his mother to the smallest circumstance that can contribute even to his momentary felicity. Her affection is always awake to the happiness of her children perhaps more than to her own. This affection has for some days passed occupyed my time, my thoughts, & my Converse almost wholly to a long absent son and one who I can seldom expect to see. He with his father leaves us tomorrow when I shall alone retrospect the past and pray for a happy meeting of all my dear connextions on this side the Grave.[1] Nor there do I stop but humbly hope for a reunion with all who are gone before us through the benignant mercy of an all sufficient saviour in some better state of existence.

Your Brother will tell you what enjoyments he has had in his late visit. He has appeared to me to be very happy and will doubtless confirm an observation you have often heard that our happiness depends upon ourselves—on the calm and equal state of our own minds and not on the Varsitile conduct of others. In that uniform adherence to that propriety of action that sets us above all dependance on the emmulous, the frivolous, or the malignant who *watch* for our *halting* with an eye of envy that betrays

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the satisfaction they enjoy in everything that would depreciate, Wound or weaken the reputation & the influence of characters much fairer than their own.

I carelessly began another letter on the same sheet with the preceeding which obliged me to cut it off before I had finished my subject—and perhaps what you may think equally important before I had said one word of your beloved Marcia or the charming Little *Marcia* Otis[2]—for the first I believe says every thing for herself, but the last cannot yet write, though she is evidently pleased with a pen and I dare say will use one as early and as agreably as any of her sex. She is indeed a lively Girl and we think improves to admiration every day—but I will say no more of her least it should increase your impatience to see her before your duty will permit you to look towards Plimouth—Plimouth, the seat of your domestic felicity and that is all that can be said of this poor, unthrifty town and its poorer inhabitants without urbanity, friendship, or politeness, but their exstention and their education may be an appoligy for some but Ill nature and falshood is without excuse, either in high or low life.

I shall write you again soon and perhaps often in the lonely three weeks of your father's absence, but I think your occupations are so much greater than your general health that those who love you will not require line for line.—I think it a very agreable circumstance for you all that your Father, brother, and yourself are likely to be for some weeks of the same family and under the roof of a friend instead of a landlady without any regard for your health, happiness, or anything else but her pay.

Make my regards to your aunt and tell her I am afraid her epistolary talents will be buryed in the calculation of bills, bussiness, and worldly cares.

I just recollect this is the fifth page and probably you have twice the number to read from your scribling little wife. Therefore in compassion to my son will hasten to subscribe the name of his very affectionate Mother,
Mercy Warren

MWP2, RC

1. The long absent son is probably George, who had moved to Maine. James is probably the one traveling with his father.

2. Marcia, the daughter of Polly and Henry Warren, was MOW's first grandchild.

96 TO ELIZABETH OTIS BROWN

Plimouth April 28th 1793

Though my dear niece has never acknowledged a letter wrote a few days after her departure from Boston, I again take up the pen and make one more effort to cultivate that social & friendly intercourse which nature dictates and which I thought would be strengthened & cherished by the agreable personal interview in your native land.

For myself I felt the warmth of affection for the daughter of a beloved brother revived by her agreable converse and hoped the tenderness was reciprocal and that she would endeavour to sooth even with a fillial hand the sorrows that have since pervaded my bosom.

The death of my amiable, accomplished Winslow must early have reached your ear—While the premature fall of the graceful, the elegant youth, the fillial son has borne down my feble fabrick. For a time I was unable to pursue my usual occupations or to amuse myself with my pen.

> "I would have died. I wished to die
> But heaven restrained the thought
> And taught this able heart of mine
> submission to its God."

I have often wished you had been acquainted with the son for whom I mourn. You would have been charmed with his pleasing manners, his literary merit, and the dignity of fortitude and equinimity which shone in his deportment under more disappointments than is usually the lot of those who begin life with prospects like his.

> "Full manfully the brave boy strove.
> Though pressing ranks oppose.
> But weak the strongest arm must prove
> Against an host of foes.
> A deadly wound my son received.
> A spear assails his side.
> Grief does not kill—for yet I live
> To tell" my Winslow died.[1]

How oft have I reallized and felt every sentiment expressed in the quotation above: and many more excellent lines that have fallen from the elegant

pen of Miss More—To that lady I once wrote & enclosed to you and at your request sent her a printed work of my own: if she ever received it I think her goodness of heart would have insured a reply. I wish also to know if one or two other volumes ever reached the persons to whom directed under the care of my niece.
[no signature]

MWP2, draft

1. Except for the last two lines of the first passage and "I" and "Winslow" in the second, the quoted lines appear in Hannah More, "Sir Eldred of the Bower," in *Poems* (Boston: Wells and Lilly, 1817), part 2, ll. 101–3, 89–96. MOW presumably sent More a copy of her own book of poems sometime in 1790 or 1791, using Elizabeth Otis Brown, who was visiting the United States from Britain, as her courier but obviously has not heard from either one since.

97 TO SARAH GRAY CARY

[In her last two decades, MOW rekindled and held fast to a relationship with Sarah Gray Cary (1753–1824), a woman several years younger but connected to MOW via family relations (her cousin was the wife of MOW's brother Samuel Allyne Otis, and Samuel introduced Sarah to her future husband, Samuel Cary). Sarah, husband Samuel, and their children spent many years in the West Indies, where Samuel had a plantation, but the twenty years since MOW had seen her seemed not to matter. The Carys returned in 1791 and lived in Chelsea, Massachusetts; Sarah Cary would over time become the last female friend MOW had in her final years.]

Plimouth June 24th 1793

No my dear Mrs Cary, I have not forgotten you. I am not one of those who ever forget their friends. The reason of my long silence has been my wish and design personally to visit the happy *retreat.*[1] From unavoidable circumstances it has been postponed from time to time and my last disappointment leads me to despair of ever passing a day at Chelsey—it is time my invaluable friend has so far recovered his late alarming Illness as to be

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comfortable at home. There we shall be happy to see any of our friends so long as life is lent, and it is no complimentary expression when I assure them that a visit from none can give us more pleasure than an interview with Mr and Mrs Cary. Do come on in the Course of this season—the journey is nothing to those who have so many years the advantage of younger life. Your family I am sure can spare you for such a purpose a few days—every thing will go on as well under the prudential eye of miss Margarette.[2] I will expect you. Let me know when I may with probability calculate on the pleasure of seing you at Plimouth. I have heard that Mr. Cary has lately escape[d] a very dangerous wound. I congratulate you on his recovery. May you long be continued to each other and to your family. What does he think of the aspect of the times? Consequences are indeed beyond the reach of human calculation—and the only consolation of the affected Children of men is that the lord reigneth. In that hand may we safely deposit our public and private concerns. May we tread with composure, dignity, and rectitude our narrow path of duty untill the curtain falls—and we are introduced to scenes of unmixed felicity. In this prayer I know you will ever unite with your
unfeigned and affectionate friend,
Mercy Warren
has your daughter no wish to visit your friends here—to her my love—

CFP3, RC

1. "Retreat" was the name given to the Cary home in Chelsea.

2. Margaret Cary, Sarah's daughter, born in 1775. Sarah had eight children living at home.

98 TO ROBERT TREAT PAINE

[Robert Treat Paine, a local literary figure in Boston, had launched a new magazine, the *Federal Orrery*, on October 20, 1794. Apparently, he must have written to MOW on October 11 to ask her to submit something to the journal. In her reply, MOW must have had a copy of the first issue in hand, for she refers to the *Orrery* essay column, "The Reaper," in the first paragraph.[1]]

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[October 1794?]

Sir,

Had not indispotition prevented Mrs Warren would have thought herself negligent thus long to have postponed the acknowledgment of the very polite address of the 11th of October from the editor of the Federal Orrery. Mr Pain may be assured he has her esteem as a writer, and the editor of the Orrery has best wishes for his success in this new and arduous literary work. She is persuaded if it does not excell the lucubrations of a common[?] news paper that it will not satisfy the ambition of Mr Pain—nor the expectations of the public. The *reaper* has announced a design of reaping indiscriminantly—but I hope the wheat will be seperated with just precission and the chaff judiciously dispersed off.

If my [??] mite could add anything to that weight of reputation I hope the Orrery will deserve, I would with alacrity take up my pen—but you probably have already so many political & moral observations, so many poetical scraps and entertaining annecdotes—so many new systems of Theology, ethics, & taste in this *age of Reason* & fashion to select from that the writers of the last age have only to read and to *learn*. If in any future day I should put anything into your hand it must be under the inviolable seal of secrecy.

The spirit of party in our country establishes the criterion of merit—blasts the works of genius—encores or damns every literary production: as the political pendulum may happen to vibrate either to the East or the West.

Your own pen may perhaps give as much entertainment as any of your numerous correspondents. I hope the scale of truth will be equally ballanced in your paper—and that it never will be tinctured with the spirit of party—the fell disease of the times—that has no motive but to subserve its own narrow principles—may you escape both the influence and the sting of this Hydra that has been tossing his snakes for a long time into every paper from New Hamshire to Georgia.[2]

These sober & friendly hints I doubt not will be received as merit from yours, etc.

[no signature]

Robert T. Pain

MWP2, draft

1. On Paine's ill treatment of the author of "The Reaper," MOW's acquaintance Judith Sargent Murray, see Gay Gibson Cima, *Early American Women Critics: Performance, Religion, Race* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 170–75.

2. Perhaps by its title and Paine's known associates and views, MOW assumes the *Orrery* will be a Federalist publication. Here she asks that he try not to be partisan in a partisan age. We are unaware of anything in the *Orrery* by MOW—and given her comments at the end, it seems unlikely she would submit to the publication, despite the flattery of being asked.

99 TO JAMES WARREN JR.

Plymouth May 14th 1796

I hope my dear son will not suffer himself to be hurt either in his feelings or any other way by the violence of party which rages with so much virulence not only in your town but in almost every other place. They have got their treaty with dear England completed—let them enjoy it—it cannot hurt us individually in whatever port it may land them—whither as the absolute slaves of Britain, or of the Idols of their own making;—it leaves them, with the conscious upbradings that they have been been [*sic*] instrumental in dissevering the United States and involving America in everlasting civil feuds.

Your parents have outlived all expectations from the world, whether the decisions of the busy actors are judicious—or whether they are marked with the most palpable absurdities. Their children wish only for a competence, the reward of industry and integrity, of which they cannot be robbed, though malice may endeavour to defeat them by the vilest insinuations. Your brother George has indeed been most cruelly treated, though yet am persuaded his character will not be essentially injured by the vile efforts that have been operating secretly ever since resentment began to rankle in the little mind of young B. L——.[1] His father with more address improved upon the system of his son, and if he[2] has not been greatly injured, has indefatigably endeavoured to ruin the character of this youth, while he pretended to revere his parents.

The little —— I shall say nothing about at present; I love her for her fathers sake—but you know her cousin G has long considered her as his decided foe.[3]

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The little —— I shall say nothing about at present; I love her for her fathers sake—but you know her cousin G has long considered her as his decided foe.[3]

As to the post office business D—— has acted a base, ungenerous part, which many think he would not have done had he not been stimulated thereto by some persons he met when on a visit to Boston, some time after it happened, and after he had written to your brother that he had the fullest confidence in his *probity and begged that the loss of the letter (per post) might not in the smallest degree interrupt their friendship.* This letter of D—— I have seen; it was laid before the court, and everything appeared so clear, relative to the integrity of your brother, that the judges passed several handsome complements in the course of their observations on the goodness of his character. The cause turned on a point of law long argued,—that as Mr. Warren could not prove the lodgment of the money in the post office (which at that time nobody ever thought of doing) he must pay the money. The money he has paid—and but in the opinion only of the most inveterate malice, he has suffered nothing but the pecuniary loss of five hundred dollars out of his own pocket. This might satisfy enemies whose hearts were not of the blackest cast without their aiming to rob the reputation of a young man of ability, industry and honour. But what can be expected, and who is safe, when party malevolence is carried to such an extreme as to wish your excellent father and *all his family in hell* only for his upright and independent opinions in politics. This has been expressed by some *murderous* wretches in our town. I doubt whither any in yours have yet arrived to such a pitch of indecency as to avow such wishes, even if they feel them—indeed, I believe there are few among you whose deceit and malignancy is of [??] deep a die as is that which tinctures the hearts of the sons of *Sceva* and their most intimate associates.[4]

If the Mr. Cushman you mention is from the town of *Winslow*,[5] I understand he is a sensible man, liberal in his opinions, both in religion and politics;—I should of course like to know he got through Hingham.[6]

I am pleased with your determination to say as little on politics as you can consistently with that independence of mind you have ever been taught to support. There must be a meanness as well as wickedness in an attempt to hurt your feelings by *pointed* exultations on success against your fathers principles.

Keep up your spirits—your father is superior to the malice of his enemies. Your brother Henry keeps steadily along in the path of domestic

felicity, and the laudable effort of providing by honest industry for a young family.[7] Nor have I a doubt that your brother George will baffle the machinations of his foes and finally rise above their detestable efforts to ruin him—while politics in the versatile state of my country, totally devoid of national character, I will not say virtue, is viewed with more indifference than almost any other important subject by your affectionate mother
M Warren

I would observe to you that in the opinion of many D——['s] character has suffered much more than your brothers in the affair above; some have not scrupled to say they doubt not he received the money duly and that he had never been know to be so much in cash as about the time he began to complain of his loss.

18th Mr. Cushman dined here yesterday. I have the pleasure to hear from him that your brother George's character stands in the fairest point of view, in spite of the malice of a party this way—that no man in that part of the Country is more influential in correcting and forming the manners of the people—that he is beloved and respected, has much business in his profession, that the innocence of his conduct was evinced to every candid mind by his generous open deportment and his readiness to submit the affair with D—— to public investigation. A point of law was urged beyond due bounds by which he lost the money, but suffered no diminution of reputation. This cannot be said of D——; his conduct in this affair had made him many enemies.

MWP1

1. Perhaps she refers to Benjamin Lincoln Jr. and his father, now turned political enemies. Benjamin Lincoln Sr. was the Collector of Customs for the port of Boston.

2. I.e., George Warren, an apparent candidate for office from Maine and obviously defeated by what MOW assumes as the Lincolns' agency.

3. Possibly the younger daughter of J02, Mary.

4. This is a rare anti-Semitic remark from MOW's pen—but one that must be noted nonetheless. *Sheva*, *Sceva*, and suchlike spellings almost always refer to a Jew in eighteenth-century writings, as they frequently do in stage plays. It seems to be aimed at D—— as a slur on his character rather than directly as an attack on his ethnicity, which is probably English.

5. Reverend Joshua Cushman was installed as a minister in Winslow, Maine, on June 10, 1795.

6. Where JW2 is living.

7. Henry Warren at this time served in the Massachusetts House from Plymouth and at the time of this letter was clerk of the House.

100 TO SARAH GRAY CARY

Plimouth June 8th 1799

I again resume the pen to speak to my dear friend once more on this side the grave. I have stood on its marge: indeed at my time of life every one stands there, yet how hard to reallize this truth. But had you have seen me when I received your last friendly welcome billit, emaciated, languid & debilitated to a degree that I could scarcely speak to a friend from day to day, you would not know how to reallize more easily that I now walk from room to room: dine with my family, ride out sometimes and am able to amuse myself with my pen or a book.

I stand a wonder to myself, and to those[?] around me, and only fear we do not feel all a gratitude that is due to the author and preserver of life who has heard the fervant prayers of a few friends to whom my protracted life may yet be of consequence.

The position of writing was for a long time uneasy to me as I should have told you before that few things in this world would give me equal pleasure as an interview with my dear Mrs Cary. If this ever takes place it must be at my own house for I have no Idea that I shall ever again go many miles from home. Come on my dear *Sally*. Leave the cares of Domestic education for a short time: and spend a few days with perhaps as affectionate a friend as any one you have on this side of eternity out of your own little family circle.

Mr Warren wishes it as well as myself and unites with me in most sincere regards to yourself and Mr Cary. I do not forget the good *Margerette* and suppose ere this if I could look into your parlour I should find several other young ladies who would command the affection of the real friend of their assiduous parents

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CFP3, RC

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I stand a wonder to myself, and to those[?] around me, and only fear we do not feel all a gratitude that is due to the author and preserver of life who has heard the fervant prayers of a few friends to whom my protracted life may yet be of consequence.

The position of writing was for a long time uneasy to me as I should have told you before that few things in this world would give me equal pleasure as an interview with my dear Mrs Cary. If this ever takes place it must be at my own house for I have no Idea that I shall ever again go many miles from home. Come on my dear *Sally*. Leave the cares of Domestic education for a short time: and spend a few days with perhaps as affectionate a friend as any one you have on this side of eternity out of your own little family circle.

Mr Warren wishes it as well as myself and unites with me in most sincere regards to yourself and Mr Cary. I do not forget the good *Margerette* and suppose ere this if I could look into your parlour I should find several other young ladies who would command the affection of the real friend of their assiduous parents

Mercy Warren

CFP3, RC

101 TO SARAH GRAY CARY

Plimouth August 18th 1799

Yesterday my dear friend I received yours dated July 13th. This like all I receive from Mrs Cary is replete with that tender interest that marks the mind of true friendship. Yes the feble glimmering of the lamp of life *must* be nearly extinguished when we arrive at the age of three score years and ten. We ought then daily to think we are each moment tottering on the marge of the grave and whither we feel our footsteps tending thither or not, we can tread but a little while longer over the deceptive road of life before we shall step into the darksome tomb: which with all its horrors may be *Illuminated* by faith in him who hath tasted death for every man. *Illumination*[1] is a cant phrase lately adopted into common converse for the purpose of party, but it is my opinion that the modern *reasoners* who boast their superior *Illumination* and the violent partizans who counteract *their* tenets—and blast all others who think differently from themselves in political matters as foes to government, religion, and order: are all equally bewildered? The gate that leads to the lightsome path of parity and peace is gaurded not by the Image: but by *truth* herself undisguised by the sophistry of politicians or infidels. Nor will the casuistry of sceptical societies, the subterfuges of statsmen in graver circles, nor the rant of the poet or the orator who "has the art of rhiming nothings into consequence" alter the system of divine decree which seems to have left mankind to dispute about Names[?] and forms and in spite of all modes of government, to cut the throats of their fellow men from Cain the first to [??] the hero of the present race of *butchers*. And what is this mighty struggle for, alas? Too generally only to invest some worthless individual with the power of robbing with impunity each Grade of society weaker by many facticious circumstances than themselves—but inscrutable as the ways of heaven at present appear undoubtedly the sceness of confusion and misery into which wretched man is frequently plunged is permited for the wisest purposes. And he who believes this sufficiently to stimulate him to regulate his own conduct without impulse of passion discovers more true wisdom and dignity than the apostles of modern philosophy—Voltaire, de Lambert, and Gibbon[2]—or the whole Herd of their theoretic diciples, either in France, England or America.

But we may my dear Sally, chatter a little in private of religion, of liberty, of Christianity or truth, but no one, either man or woman in our times, has a trait of virtue or principle whose politics are not exactly squared to the creed of the court. Every one else is a *disorganizer*—a *demoralizer*—and are not *disorganization* and *demoralization* pretty terms to pit against each other, by those who have no morals or order, or charity, or principles of any kind to govern their own actions and passions—

How have I strongly verged to a subject totally out of my mind or design when I took up my pen to address my mild, domestic, pious, amiable friend. It would have been more natural for one to have discanted on your observation that "the frequent absences from our children severly try the feelings of the mothers heart" but *mine* has been so often wrung[?] by the circumstances of separation—*final separation* from the most amiable of sons: that often enjoin silence on myself that I need not wound those I love by listening to my recollections & sorrows untill simpathy might awaken some restless anticipations in their own minds.

I have wrote a *long letter* without replying to the subject of yours, an inquiry after the state of my health. I will tell you in a few words some days I feel as if I could ride half way to Chelsey. Others weak and debilitated but not so but[3] that I can think converse with my friends present and long to see the absent. If we meet again in this world I believe it must be in my residence at Plimouth. If we do not—I hope we shall be prepared for a society more perfect, more adapted to improvement in knowledge, gratitude & adoration *only* of the best of beings. When may we meet—and meet our beloved children and friends—whither they are gone before us or whither they spend a few more days in this mixed state?

Since the date of your last I see by the public papers your house has been struck by a flash of lightening by which a person therin received the summons of Death. This to most people would be an alarming shock, but I doubt not your calm mind was as usual unruffled. I have been repeatedly asked if your house was pointed.[4] I am not able to say. I do not recollect but to the *philosopher* it is an interesting position: I have not left myself room enough here to say all I wish to on this subject. You will inform me of the circumstances when you write again: as it will be particularly gratifying to some of my friends.

Mr Cary will accept the most friendly regards of Mr Warren and myself. Be assured that you and yours have ever the best wishes of your real friend,
Mercy Warren—

Is Margaret never to visit me? There is indeed nor amusements nor company nor anything to induce it, but the wishes of an aged feble friend of her parents.

CFP3, RC

1. MOW alludes to the Illuminati scare of 1798 in which an alleged secret society of foreign radicals was said to be infiltrating the United States. As with much else during the period of the Alien and Sedition Acts, the obsession with the Illuminati provoked partisan reaction, with the Federalists accusing the Democratic Republicans (whom MOW supported) of consorting with revolutionaries.

2. Once again, MOW attacks the philosophes and English sympathizers as religious skeptics. In addition to Voltaire, she refers to Jean Le Rond D'Alembert (1717–83) and Edward Gibbon (1737–94).

3. I.e., bad.

4. I.e., had a lightning rod.

102 TO SARAH GRAY CARY

[In 1800, MOW again had to face the loss of a son in a remote location, this time her youngest, George, in Maine.]

Plimouth August 23rd 1800

It is long since I have taken up my pen to offer any of my thoughts to my Mrs Cary. Why should I—why should I call her a moment from the pleasing occupation of rearing and instructing a young family and endeavouring to make them useful when she must cease to speak to them, but by their recollection of her virtuous example. I have not forgotten my friend. I wish to converse with her and often wish to see her more than almost any of the small number still on this side the grave. But a mind immersed in its own afflictions is apt to sink into indolence and to neglect the occupations that have heretofore given them the most pleasure.

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I have expected your simpathizing tear over the tomb of my George, whom had you have known you would have wept for as a sensible agreable acquaintance as well as a most fillial amiable son of friends you love: and whom you doubtless pity when you recollect the lovely trio in the bloom of youth that they have consigned to the arms of Death.

I turn from the subject least I should complain. Did I not deserve these severe tryals they would not be inflicted. If I improve them aright they may not be repeated. I would hush every murmur convinced that my cup has been mixed just as it ought to be and that it is my part to endeavour to investigate the short path I have yet to tread, so as to set my foot on a rock that can never be moved.

I rejoice that your numerous family still remains unbroken. Go on my dear madam in the charming work of instiling those principles of virtue that may deter the youthful circle from slipery paths of vice or the dangerous errors of opinion that remarkably hang around them in this day of deviation from the pure principles taught in a sacred code which if not *burlesqued* is too generally neglected in the fashionable world. The pious instructions of parental care may sometimes lie dorment in the whirl of bussiness or passion—but I am persuaded they are never lost. They return to the aid of our children in all their afflictions and support them in the hour of Death—a rich reward for the most laborious exertions of maternal tenderness. I could protract this subject and call up others on which much might be said: but my mind has lost much of its energy. It flys from theme to theme and centres in its own grief—while yours is in full vigour, which I pray God may long continue its exertions for the benefit of your family and friends among other good works. I hope you will come to Plimouth and console by your pious observations and enliven by your chearful deportment the brow of age and sorrow.

I should be ungratful to him who permits me the light of the sun if I did not acknowledge his goodness in restoring that blessing after a deprivation of sight for several months in the course of the last distressing winter.—

Mr Warrens regards to Mr Cary & yourself are ever united with those of your affectionate friend
Mercy Warren

CFP3, RC

103 TO SARAH GRAY CARY

February 7th 1802

This day counts up twelve months since I have been able to read a page, or take up my pen.[1] You who can contemplate the wisdom and goodness of divine dispensation, who have health and vigour both of body and mind, cannot be indisposed to write and haste to strengthen the mental views of a friend, whose outworks are weakened & corporeal sight darkened. But you have cares, lovely cares, a family who I hope, promises to reward every attention that occupies the time of so good a mother. I too, have had the important charge committed to me, of educating youth of the best disposition, and regret that it has not been executed in a more perfect manner, yet hope I have not lived in vain.

I have stood long in the vineyard and seen many, many indeed, drop around me younger than myself and perhaps better qualified for useful labour. You my dear, Mrs Cary are almost the only female friend I have left, to whom I can without restraint pour out the flow of thoughts as they arrive, amidst the chequered hue of my span of life. But the first friend of my heart still lives, and enjoys as much health and happiness, as any one who has seen such a variety of change, who has consigned to the grave three dutiful and amiable sons, as accomplished friends in the zenith of usefulness & capacity that fed the fondest hopes of the parent. I will be silent on the theme,—and consider, the sovereign Lord of all who lent, "has took but what he gave."

I have two sons yet left to smoth the pillow of age, who I hope will be spared to fill up a useful life, after they have closed the eyes of their affectionate parents.

Tell me in your next if there is not a probability, if we should both stand a year or two longer, that we may have another interview before we mix with our departed friends and innumerable rational existences, inhabitants of worlds unknown? I hope you do not think I write in a gloomy style. I do not feel as if I did. I tread down the remnant of life with a tolerable degree of chearfulness—my days are tranquil, my nights not wearisome: I wake in the morning with a mind [??] with gratitude that it is as well with me as it is.

Methinks you are ready to say by this time can my friend talk of nothing but herself? Yes, I could call other subjects, but fear I should be too dif-

fuse. I do not suppose you interest yourself much, on the political themes that agitate our contemporaries. Yet no woman of only a common understanding, endowed with a due [??] of the benevolent affections, can avoid listening to subjects interesting indeed to the happiness of society, while she laments the bitterness of spirit that prevails & the little candour exercised between man & man.

The united regards of Mr Warren, myself, and family, attend Mr Cary—are your family all about you yet?—give my love to Margeret—could you not spare her a week or two, & could she make herself happy so long with,
Yr affecte friend,
Mercy Warren

Sunday 14th

You will be afflicted to hear our friend Mrs Russell[2] was attacked the night of the 12th Inst by a severe paralytic shock—she has not spoken & I fear she never will again.

May we all find our smitten friends are angels sent from heaven, on errands full of love.[3]

CFP3, RC

1. MOW suffered throughout her later adult life with crippling headaches and declining eyesight, including periods of temporary blindness. After this point, she relied almost exclusively on her son James, who moved back to Plymouth, to serve as her amanuensis.

2. The death of Elizabeth Russell of Plymouth, widow of Charles Russell, was reported in the *Boston Columbian Centinel* on March 3, 1802.

3. Following the postscript, letter reads, "Mrs Cary."

104 TO A VERY YOUNG LADY

[This is one of several letters to unidentified young women that MOW wrote later in life. At some point, she realized that with three sons dead and the other two situated in life, her role as maternal figure was threatened. But it appears she found a number of surrogate daughters in young family members and children of

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friends. The only identifying mark in this letter is the name Betsey.]

[Early 1800s?]

My dear Miss

Though our acquaintance is of a late date yet I think I may venture to salute you under the tender and endearing appellation of my amiable young friend; and were I longer to neglect a return to your agreeable letter, I fear notwithstanding the goodness of your heart you might suspect me not fond of cultivating those friendly movements of soul which dictated every period thereof. It was not necessary to collect a number of reasons by way of apology for gratifying me with a line[:] the easy expression, the just sentiment and striking observations therein contained indicate a mind actuated by the worthiest motives.

In an age when virtue and friendship are scarcely to be found in any of the several periods of life, what a lesson is it to maturer years to behold it conspicuous in the bosom of youth!—I think the observation of the poet with regard to a friend "All like the purchase, few the price will pay"[1] is quite as applicable to virtue;—we hold up the picture, admire the portrait, but when called upon to exhibit a copy what bubbles of fancy prevent the execution of the exalted purpose?

It gives me the highest pleasure when I meet with a young person who promises an example of piety and benevolence to the degenerate manners of modern days. Your scrutinizing your own heart and inquiring into the spring of your own actions, has given me a hint to do the same, and to ask myself what it is prompts me to wish the continuance of our correspondence may be mutually agreeable;—on examination I find self-love, that ever lasting source of good and evil (in the opinion of some) lies at the bottom, for had I not lived long enough to see the instability of all human enjoyment, I should promise myself both pleasure and improvement from the intercourse begun between us.

As youth and vivacity are seldom long pleased, and happy in company, where the disparity of years is considerable, I must own I have a higher opinion of myself when assured by my dear Betsey that she could be and was entirely satisfied for many successive days, when not only secluded from all other company but denyed even the appearance of the sun's all cheering rays.

But what is it that enlivens the social hour but a reciprocal esteem and a similarity of sentiment? And when that esteem is so well grounded as to give hope that it will not end with the flying hours, but be perfected when time is no more, in the presence of him who is the fountain from whence flows each benevolent affection, this and this only may be styled a rational friendship, and when founded on such a basis, nor clouds nor absence will prevent is completion.

I cannot fully answer your enquiry with regard to the unhappy lady, you mention in yours, but will give you a short sketch of her character from a gentleman lately arrived from Madeira. She is a lady of family and fortune, married early in life, but miserable in the union; and after becoming the mother of two children she retired to a convent, which she forsook for a tour to America. She is now gone to Philadelphia with the gentleman who attended her hither, though much beneath her in rank and fortune, but she disavows all manner of connexion with him except what arises from the accidental circumstances, of being passengers in the same ship & speaking the same language.

Though charity may hope she is unfortunate, rather than guilty, yet prudence must pronounce her conduct highly censurable, and as indiscretion is often the first step to infamy, can female vigilance be too wakeful to prevent the poisonous breath of slander from impeaching her reputation. M. Warren.

MWP1

1. From Edward Young's *The Complaint, or Night-Thoughts on Life, Death and Immortality* (London: J. and F. Rivington, 1773), Night 2, p. 31.

105 TO MARGARET CARY

[MOW's correspondence in the decade before her death has a few bursts, including a series of letters (now in the Houghton Library at Harvard) on the details of publishing her *History* (conducted mostly through her son James and a friend, James Freeman) and the letters to JA occasioned by his critique of his portrayal in that book, mentioned earlier. But with the death of JW in 1808, and perhaps emotionally exhausted by what had seemed to be

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the loss of the Adamses' friendship forever, she reserved her last letters for establishing contact with a diminishing circle of friends and corresponding family members and expressing her faith in Christianity.]

Plymouth Janry 1st 1814

I cannot tell my dear Margaret how much I am delighted with her letters. Yet she makes high demands upon me both for love and gratitude, as well as for her opinion of the powers of the mind, which has led her to ask questions in hers which I think far above my understanding and capacity to answer in a satisfactory manner.

I am tired of the disputes of Theologians and Metaphysicians, and more sickened by the bitterness of spirit which reigns among professed Christians. I have not seen either Channing's, Thatcher's, or Cary's Discourses,[1] nor the pernicious book which gave rise to them, and which I presume will soon fall into contempt. Nor do I feel much curiosity to reperuse the labours of the Learned for the refutation of Infidels. I am persuaded the gates of Earth nor Hell will ever prevail against the doctrine of Christ, yet I feel as if my stupid mind could never be much more enlightened in this benighted state of being, incased as it is in such a feeble fabrick.

I have had a long thread of time and many advantages for improvement, nor have I been inattentive to them all—yet, I feel very, very deficient in the knowledge of God, and the infinitely divine system of his providential government. But let us search the scriptures, for in them it is said we find eternal life. In them we also find, that "great is the mystery of godliness."[2]

The continual disputes on the Trinitarian system, in my opinion, do but darken the minds of many pious believers. It is a subject that has always made me tremble for fear of error, so much, that I seldom have dared to converse upon it, more especially when treated warmly or lightly, as is sometimes the case, either from the pride of talents or the hope of victory. I would cry out, with the humble disciple, "Lord I believe—help my unbelief"[3]—How shall a feeble mortal attempt to fathom the immensity of Deity!

We know there is only one self-existent, infinitely wise, and adorable Being,—possessed of all possible perfection; we believe that he has sent a person styled his *beloved son*, to redeem a wretched race. Him, he has com-

manded us to hear. To him who was with Him before the World began, he has given all power in Heaven and on Earth. Of his essence, of his equality with the Father, it becomes not us to decide. He has said, "my Father is greater than I," but that, "My Father and I are one."[4] I lay my hand on my mouth and silently bow, not doubting, if we sincerely and devoutly desire to know God and Him whom He hath sent, we shall have light sufficient to lead us safely through this valley of night, and introduce us where we shall see and understand more of the true meaning of St. Thomas's expression, "My Lord and my God"[5]—as well as more—infinitely more of the nature of essence of both the Father and the son, than can possibly be discovered or comprehended, while in this probationary state.

Your observations relative to my not being placed near your residence, are very flattering. I should in younger life have preferred living in the city, fully persuaded that the advantages to taste, genius, and many other enjoyments, could be obtained only there. But when I retrospect what I have enjoyed & what I have suffered there, Boston with all its splendours, wears to me a gloomy aspect. My lot was cast in pleasant places, replete with a thousand blessings, which required the highest gratitude to them who made

"My cup run o'er,
"And in a kind and faithful Friend,
"Had doubled all my store."[6]

I now only regret past neglects and pray for more diligence and resignation in future.

To you and your Family my amanuensis and the other branches of my Family present their regards with the wishes of the new year, in unison with
Yr affectionate,
M. Warren

CFP3, RC

1. She may possibly refer here to the liberal, Unitarian wing of American Congregationalism: William Ellery Channing (1780–1842), Samuel Cooper Thacher (1785–1818), and Thomas Cary (1745–1808), all from Massachusetts and all preachers of "rational" Christianity.

2. 1 Timothy 3:16.

3. Mark 9:24.
4. John 10:29.
5. John 20:28.
6. Verse from a hymn by Joseph Addison, "When All Thy Mercies O God" (1712).

106 TO MARY GRAY OTIS

[The following is one of the last known letters from MOW. Although physically weakened, she never seems to have lost either her mental faculties or her spirit, even after this letter. Mary Otis, MOW's sister-in-law, has just lost her husband, MOW's brother Samuel Allyne Otis, who was the secretary to the U.S. Senate from April 8, 1789, until his death on April 22, 1814.]

Plymouth May 24th 1814

I have just heard that my dear sister has finished her melancholy journey & that she and her dear Children have arrived in health at the former residence of their excellent father. To dilate on the subject of the death of my beloved brother is too much for me. Yet, I cannot forbear to take up my pen which I should have done before, had I known where and in what situation to find you. I do it not now with any idea of giving consolation to the afflicted bosom. I do it because it is my duty & because I shall ever love to converse with those so dear to my excellent brother as my own Sister & his Children.

If I can say but little that is comforting, I console myself that you do not stand in need of it. Your consolations are derived from an higher source than any thing that can be expressed by the tongue or the pen of a feeble mortal. Especially from one who feels so much for the loss of a brother & friend.

May 25—This was begun yesterday with design to send by this mornings post, but unavoidably interrupted. I have now the satisfaction to tell you that I have this day heard by my Son that he has visited you & found you as he expected calm and resigned. I was glad to hear he found you with your charming friends from the Retreat.[1] How will you delight, on [??] & [??] each other on to the rest enjoyed before us by our beloved deceased.

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I have heard few circumstances relative to the sickness & death of my brother. Did he suffer much bodily pain? Were his intellectual powers continual? Was he willing the tender ties of nature should break[?] asunder at the call of his heavenly Father? My dear Harriet will write me soon & as soon as she is able my Sister will do this also. As to myself, I feel daily bending towards to the tomb under a weight of years and infirmities—yet, considering my age am remarkably well & do not despair of seeing you and your Children once more around my Elbow Chair. My family at the other house know not that I am writing, else their affectionate sympathies would accompany this. My Amanuensis has a very feeling heart—a heart formed for friendship which he has ever felt in the highest degree for Uncle Otis & family. He says no more on this subject at this time but requests your acceptance & also that of his Cousins of his affectionate sympathies.

The recollection of a visit made me a short time before he went on to Washington has been & will be a source of comfort to me. Yet I recollect his going backward to the door, getting into the carriage & fixing his eyes upon his Sister as she stood at the window, looking at his intelligent countenance where she thought she read in every feature that he never expected to behold her faded countenance again in this world. He doubtless expected to weep for her—it was more natural than to think she could live to pour the tear of grief over his manes with his other surviving friends. May we my dear Sister, while we tarry be diligent followers of those who through faith and patience are inheriting the promises! This is the evening & the morning prayer of
Yr feeble Sister,
Warren

MWP2, draft

1. Mary has gone to visit her cousin Sarah Gray Cary and Sarah's husband, Samuel, at the Cary homestead, the Retreat, in Chelsea, Massachusetts.

[Mercy Otis Warren continued to correspond with Sarah Gray Cary, and her last known letter was dated July 14. Shortly after a visit from that epistolary friend, Warren died at home on October 19, 1814, in the presence of her surviving sons.]

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